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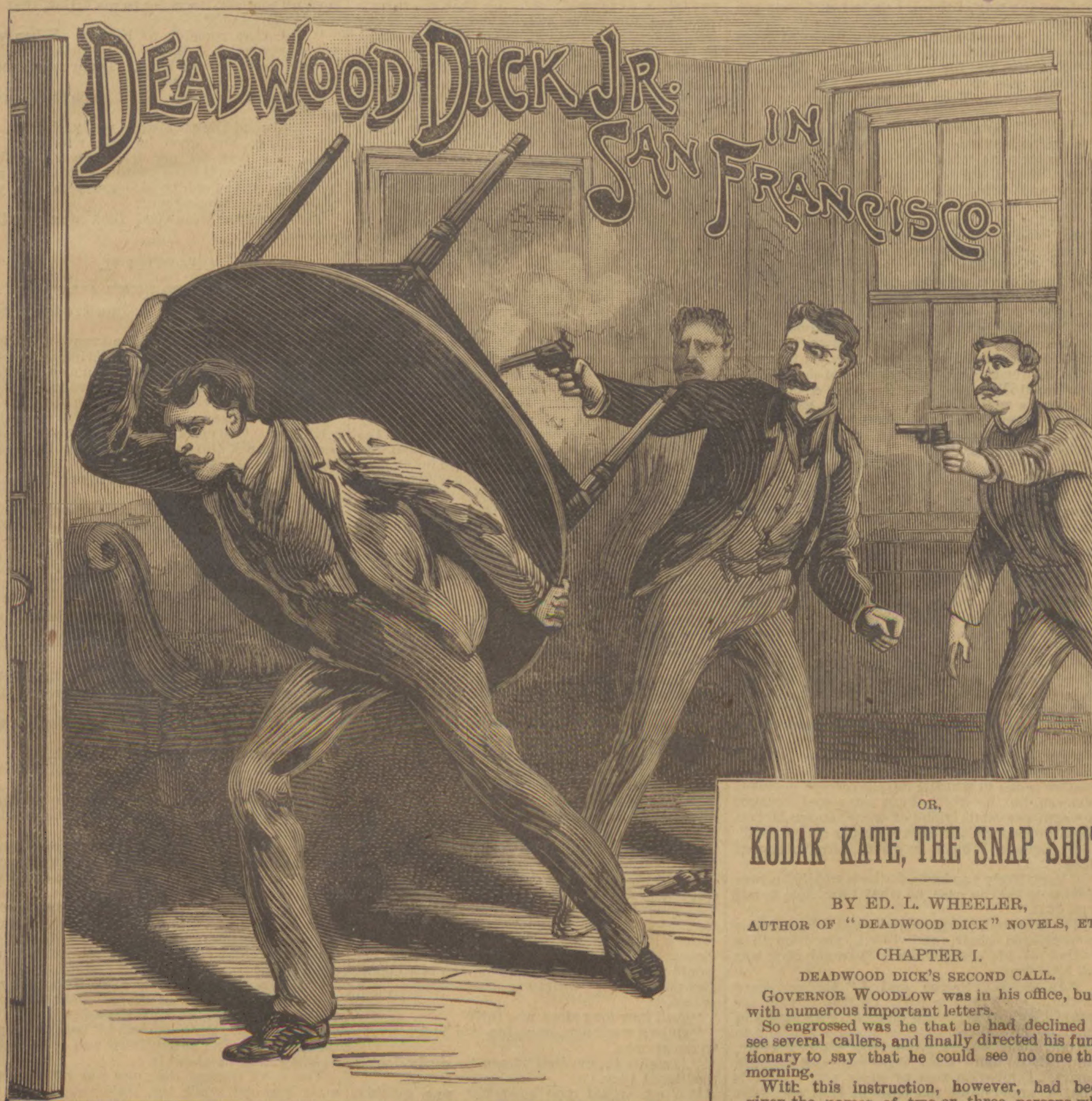
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DICK CAUGHT UP A ROUND TABLE, AND SHIELDING HIMSELF BEHIND IT,
RAN FOR THE DOOR.

OR, KODAK KATE, THE SNAP SHOT.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DEADWOOD DICK'S SECOND CALL.

GOVERNOR WOODLOW was in his office, busy with numerous important letters.

So engrossed was he that he had declined to see several callers, and finally directed his functionary to say that he could see no one that morning.

With this instruction, however, had been given the names of two or three persons who were to be considered as exceptions, and who were to be admitted if they happened to apply.

And the first named of these was Mr. Richard Bristol.

The governor was working away like a beaver, when the door of his private office opened and his orderly appeared, closely followed by a young man, handsome, resolute-looking and of powerful build.

"Mr. Bristol, sir," spoke the functionary; and bowing the caller in he closed the door after him, with himself on the outside.

Governor Woodlow, brushing everything from in front of him on the desk, rose quickly and extended his hand, saying:

"Detective Bristol, I am more than pleased to see you. My messenger found you, then, did he?"

Deadwood Dick took the proffered hand, replying:

"Yes, sir; he found me; and I am here to serve you in any way I can. From what your man had to say, I take it you have further detective work for me."

"That is the case exactly, sir. Sit down, and we will have a talk. So well did you serve me on that other occasion, that I find it impossible to resist calling upon you again."

"I am at your service, sir, and cheerfully," Dick assured.

"So I am willing to believe, though I have no claim whatever upon your time or talent. But, by the way, Bristol, I understand that you are rich."

"I am a good many degrees removed from penury, sir," Dick acknowledged, smiling.

"Exactly; and for that reason I would like to ask why you are a detective. I am at loss to understand it. Your life is in constant jeopardy."

"Well, I am a detective because I really enjoy the excitement it brings," the redoubtable Richard explained; "but for the more important reason that I am oath-bound to hunt outlaws down and bring them to justice, wherever found."

"Hal now I begin to understand the situation. You must have suffered some personal wrong in the past, that has made you the sworn enemy of evil-doers of every stripe. Or maybe you have taken up arms against them because of a wrong done to some near and dear friend."

"Your first surmise is the correct one," Dick made answer. "The cause is my own." And a grim, determined look settled upon his fine face with the words. "Over the grave of the original Deadwood Dick, and over the body of my dead mother as well, I swore to become as great a terror to evil-doers as had been the man whose name I there and then assumed. But, what is the case this time?"

"To begin with, it is likely to prove a very hazardous one."

"That matters little, sir. I am well used to danger, in pursuing my self-imposed crusade against crime."

"Very good so far, then; but the case is one that will call you away to San Francisco. You may find some objection in that feature of it."

"Not the least. The whole country is my field, governor—north, south, east, and west; and whether San Francisco or New York, it is all one to me. I am something of a cosmopolitan."

"You seem to be, certainly. Then I understand that you are ready to undertake the case, even though you have not yet heard what it is."

"I stand ready to serve you again, sir, if the case is one that I am capable of conducting, so let me know what it is."

"I will give you the particulars as far as I am acquainted with them, immediately. The matter is one in which I have no direct personal concern, but in which I am interested because a warm personal friend of mine, Judge Morris Wynthorpe, of California is deeply concerned."

"I believe I have heard of him," observed Dick.

"Very likely you have, for he is widely known. And now for the case, or what I am able to tell you of it."

The austere-looking official settled back in his comfortable chair, and lifted one foot to a corner of his desk, while Deadwood Dick was all attention.

"Judge Wynthorpe and I," the governor began, "have been regular correspondents for years. We were college chums, years ago, and have never allowed the fires of our friendship to go out. Our letters have been quite regular, and seldom more than three weeks or a month apart. I mention this to show you how it is that I understand the case as I do, and offer it in explanation of the call you have received to take this matter in hand."

"After you had so successfully terminated the work you took charge of for me some time ago, I wrote a full account of the matter to the judge, and did not hesitate at all about giving you the praise that was due you. Almost the next mail brought a reply, in which the judge explained something of his own case, and wanted to know where you could be found. From that began a series of letters between us, and this is the outcome of it all. But now the matter has taken a sudden and much more serious turn than it had then."

"But to come to the particulars, let me state first that Judge Wynthorpe is and has been for weeks, I may say months, a persecuted man. Several months ago he sentenced to imprisonment for life one Madoc Gowfrey, a notorious burglar and the head of a band of rascals of the worst sort in San Francisco. Some time after that, warning letters began to reach the judge, demanding his influence with the governor toward the pardon and release of the imprisoned burglar. At first he paid no attention to these missives, but the threats they contained finally led him to put the matter into the hands of the police. Spotters were put on the case, but their efforts amounted to nothing, as they could get hold of no clues."

"Now, as I said, the matter has taken a sudden and more serious turn. The heavy hand has fallen, so to speak, showing that the threats were not idle. The judge's young and pretty wife has been carried off, and is held as hostage, if the word will apply, to force the judge to come to the terms demanded. This he has all along refused to do. Now, however, the screws are being put on hard. He has taken almost every possible step toward the recovery of his wife, but all in vain, and I believe he is ready to come to the terms imposed, but here a new dilemma appears. The governor is his political enemy, and he dreads a refusal if he should apply to him. He is eager to exhaust every other means first. You will readily understand that it is a matter of some magnitude. In one respect the case is not unlike the one you worked out for me. What do you think of it?"

"It seems to be a case with a vengeance," Dick remarked.

"And so it is. It has stumped the best detective talent of San Francisco, and now, as a last hope, the judge wants you to tackle it."

"Which I will do," Dick readily assented. "Can you tell me anything more? I must have every point possible, you know. The smallest item is often of importance to me."

"There is really but little more that I can tell you, unless you are able to draw it out by questioning. In calling you in, however the judge wants you to use the utmost caution not to let the rascals know that you have taken hold of the case. One of the best of the police detectives has disappeared, and it is suspected that he has met with foul play. One great feature of the mystery is, that the judge's every move seems to be known to his enemies as soon as it is made. It can't be explained how. He can make no move that is not known to them almost immediately."

"It grows interesting," Deadwood Dick declared, "and I am eager to get to work upon it. The deeper the mystery the better I like it. Anything further that you can tell me about it?"

"Go ahead and ask questions, sir. You will get at what you want a good deal quicker, perhaps."

"Very well, that suits me if it suits you. How was the judge's wife carried off?"

"Hal there you touch a point, the first shot. It was in the most mysterious manner imaginable. She retired with her husband one night as usual; he heard nothing during the night; next morning she was gone. On the floor was found a small bottle and a damp handkerchief, which went to prove that some anæsthetic had been used. The door of the bedroom was open, as was that of the hall below, and on the outside steps was found a peculiar-looking wire key. The police were notified immediately, but nothing was to be discovered. That same day there came a letter to the judge, in his wife's hand, stating that she was a prisoner and that she would not be released except on the one condition that Madoc Gowfrey be first liberated from prison."

"And how long since was this?"

"Over a week ago, now, for the judge wrote to me at once."

"It seems to me that it can be easily done," meditated Dick.

"What would you suggest?" was quickly asked.

"The prisoner might be freed, but watched,

and then re-arrested when the judge's wife has been found."

"A good-enough scheme, Bristol, but it won't work. I did not impress one point clearly enough. The condition is that Gowfrey must be pardoned. See?"

"That knocks my idea in the head, then."

"Exactly. Your task will be nothing so easy as that, I well imagine. Your mettle is likely to be severely tested."

"It has never been found wanting yet," responded Dick, without any show of boasting.

"But, has the judge outlined any course he desires me to take?"

"Yes, he has, and I might have forgotten to mention that. As I have said, every move he makes is immediately known to his enemies. Hence you must not go near his house when you reach San Francisco. You are to go at once to the general post-office and inquire for letters for Denman Tremont. I am to telegraph to the judge when you start from here, and he will post letters of instruction so that you will find them upon your arrival. Don't forget the name."

"I shall not. It is not a bad idea. But, his letters of instruction may amount to little. He may tell me everything that is not important, and withhold some trifling point—trifling to him, I mean—that would be of more importance than all the rest together to me. But, that remains to be seen."

"Yes; that remains to be seen. When will you start for San Francisco, Mr. Bristol?"

"By the very first train. There is one early this afternoon, I believe."

"Can you be ready so soon? You have barely an hour."

"Deadwood Dick is always ready, sir."

"Well, go, and good luck go with you. Do your very best for my friend in his trouble, Bristol, and you'll have another claim upon me. Any time that I can be of service to you, you have but to command me."

An hour later Deadwood Dick was whirling westward.

CHAPTER II.

KODAK KATE, DICK'S ALLY.

AN aged man entered the San Francisco general post-office.

He was stoop-shouldered, had snow-white hair and beard, and his step was tottering and slow.

Stopping, he looked around him as a stranger might be expected to do, and advanced to the delivery window with an uncertain air.

When he spoke his voice was scarce more than a whisper. The clerk at the window had to bend nearer and ask him to repeat. It was impossible for any one else to hear.

"Any letters for Denman Tremont?" the old man repeated.

The clerk turned back and looked, and approached the window with two letters in hand.

"Where do you expect letters from?" he inquired.

"Undoubtedly posted in this city," was the answer; "possibly in Oakland. Anyhow, I am Denman Tremont."

The letters were passed out, and the old man took them and tottered away as feebly as he had come, apparently paying no attention to anything.

Scarcely had the old man left the window than another man stepped up to it, displayed a police badge, and in a low tone demanded:

"What name did that old gentleman give you?"

"Denman Tremont," was answered.

The man turned hastily away, and followed the old man out.

And so slow were the movements of the aged person that both reached the sidewalk at about the same time.

Denman Tremont immediately crossed to a cab that was waiting, climbed into it with some effort, and soon as the door closed the cab drove rapidly away.

The second man, he of the police badge, seemed at loss what to do. It was plain that he wanted to keep Denman Tremont in sight, and he glanced around eagerly, as if in search of another cab.

While he stood thus undecided, though it was but a moment, a plainly dressed little woman at the corner of the post-office steps aimed a Kodak at him, pressed the button and "bagged" a picture of him. And so skillfully was it done that he knew nothing about it.

The next instant the man was off on a run after the cab, while the little woman with the Kodak, with a smile of satisfaction, moved off down the street.

Deadwood Dick had played his first card in this game of wits!

Meantime the cab was gaining speed, and continued to gain until it was outdoing the regulation pace.

Presently it turned a corner, soon another, and in a few minutes it was lost to sight of the man who had set out to follow it, and he gave up the pursuit in disgust.

Some distance further it went at its breakneck gait, then it slowed down and proceeded at an ordinary trot.

Later on it drew to a sudden stop, and the cabman gave forth a short, sharp whistle.

The door of the cab immediately opened, and out stepped Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Denman Tremont had vanished, and all that remained of him was contained in a small valise which he had in hand.

The driver of the cab had been paid liberally in advance, and with a wave of the hand Dick now dismissed him, and the cab and passenger parted company.

Dick stepped out at a goodly pace, looking not unlike a new arrival in the city who had not yet located, the valise he carried giving rise to that impression concerning him.

The redoubtable Richard was no stranger in San Francisco, and the cabman having had instructions where to drop him, it took him but a moment to get his baggage after getting out of the vehicle, and a short walk brought him to a hotel.

Here he entered, and stopping to say something to the clerk, went immediately to a room which he had previously engaged.

Once within the room, with the door locked, he threw off his hat and set about learning the contents of the letters he had taken out of the post-office.

These letters were greatly unlike, one being large and bulky, incased in a large buff envelope, and the other small, very thin, and inclosed in a small white envelope, but both were directed in the same hand.

Dick opened the smaller one first.

It was simply a note, and it read:

"Take care! Have reason to believe you will be watched when you call for this letter at post-office. If so, you may as well drop the case and go away. Your life will probably pay the penalty if you remain."

That was all, and Dick smiled as he read it.

There was no signature; but no signature was necessary.

"I am not built that way, Judge Wynthorpe," Dick said, half aloud. "I do not scare off so easily."

Returning that missive to its envelope, he proceeded to open the larger one. This he did very slowly as if half absent-mindedly. He was thinking.

"I must communicate with the judge," he decided. "This note proves that he is ready to give right up, and, if he does that, he will spoil my chance for work on the case."

The larger letter proved to be quite lengthy, as he had anticipated. But it told him little that he had not already learned from Governor Woodlow. It went over the case at length, and it would be unpardonable to reproduce it here.

"It amounts to little," Dick mused. "He has told me a good deal of nothing, just as I remarked to Governor Woodlow. I believe I shall have to seek an interview with the judge in some way or other. I want to see some of these letters that are being written to him. But, I can make no move now until I hear from my ally."

Having made himself familiar with everything the letter contained, Dick tore it and the note and burned them, every scrap.

That done, he settled down with a paper, as though waiting for some one to drop in.

He had been in the room an hour, perhaps, when a woman entered the office of the hotel, advanced to the clerk's desk and inquired:

"Is Mr. Alex Reed stopping here?"

"He is," was the answer.

"Is he in the house?"

"Yes, he is in his room."

"Very good, I want to be shown to his room."

There was something about this woman that smacked of terse business every time she spoke.

The clerk beckoned to a boy and directed him to conduct the lady up to room forty-two and the lady followed her young pilot up stairs.

Arriving at the right number, the call-boy knocked.

The door was opened by—Deadwood Dick.

"Here I am," spoke the lady.

"So I see," responded Dick. "Come," he added, "and we will step into the reception-room here at the end of the hall."

The boy was dismissed, and Dick led the way to the room mentioned.

No one was there save an old lady, who was seated near a window at the far end, reading.

Dick led his visitor to a seat at the opposite end of the apartment.

"Well, Miss Bur—"

"Stop!" the lady ordered, lifting her finger.

"Then you want me to call you Kodak Kate?"

"No, not that, either," smiling. "No need to mention any name whatever in speaking to me."

"I perceive that you are aware of the importance of keeping names close in conversation, anyhow," remarked Dick. "But, what luck?"

"This is the result of the work you required of me."

She handed Dick a small, circular photograph, hastily finished.

It was a picture of the man who had followed "Denman Tremont" out of the post-office. This was the woman who had "bagged" the likeness from the corner of the steps, as described.

"Kodak" Kate was a private detective of whom Deadwood Dick had heard, and upon his arrival in San Francisco he had engaged her to act as his ally for this move in the case in hand.

On his way to the city he had had ample time to study well the different aspects of the case, so far as he had learned the particulars of it, and there was one point that had impressed him. That point was, the statement that Judge Wynthorpe's every move was known immediately to his enemies.

That being the case, he had reasoned, would it not be probable—and it was at any rate possible—that the judge's intention of dropping letters for Denman Tremont, to be called for at the general post-office, would be known too? And, that known, was it not highly likely that some one would be on the watch, to see who the person calling for the letters would prove to be?

These thoughts had impressed him strongly. He had to get the letters out of the office, that was positive, and in taking them out he must play the point so well as to outwit any one who might be lying in wait. Not only that, but there might be a chance for a clew to the whole mystery. If he could defeat the watcher, and follow him, he might get a grip upon the case in short order. But right there the difficulties in the way presented themselves.

His first thought had been to get some one else to play the part of Denman Tremont and take the letters out of the office, while he himself, lying in wait, would be free-handed to shadow any one who might follow the decoy. But there was a serious objection to that plan. The letters would not be in his possession, and might get lost before he could get hold of them. Besides, it would require finer play to obtain them from his ally without detection, then it would to take them from the office himself and throw a shadower off his track afterward.

At this point had come to mind the recollection of Kodak Kate, of whom he had heard, as said, and he resolved at once to call upon her for help as soon as he reached San Francisco. The result has been shown.

Dick studied the picture carefully for some moments.

"A stranger to me," he presently remarked.

"Do you know him?"

"Never saw him before," Kodak Kate answered.

"And you are sure he was watching me?"

"No chance for a mistake about that. He followed your cab at a run."

"That settles the point. I will keep this and learn who the man is, and his interest in the matter."

"And I presume you are done with me," the woman suggested.

"I am not sure about that," answered Dick. "I may have occasion to call upon you for further help before I am done with this thing. You have served me well this time, and I am proud of you as a helper."

"Thank you," was the response; "but that will be poor satisfaction to me unless I may know whom I have helped, sir. I know you are a detective; no other could have played the role so well. Will you tell me who you are? You certainly may trust a fellow-detective, woman though I be."

CHAPTER III.

OPENING DECIDEDLY WARM.

A WORD concerning Kodak Kate.

She was the "Nelly Bly" of San Francisco.

Beginning as a reporter, she had become a detective.

Now in the employ of the Secret Service, through that means Dick had come to hear of her.

But, like Dick, she was an independent detective too, though not to such a degree as he, for her bread depended upon her work.

Dick had to smile at her request.

"I see your woman's curiosity is alive," he playfully remarked.

"And is it not pardonable this once?" she immediately demanded archly.

"Perhaps; but consider how you just cautioned me against the mention of any name."

"How provoking you are! That was when we first entered the room. Now we are sure no one can overhear. But no matter; you evidently do not want to reveal your identity."

"Not so, Miss Burton," in low tone. "You have served me well, and I am willing to grant your request and trust you. You may have heard of me, perhaps. My name is Richard Bristol; otherwise known as Deadwood Dick, Jr."

Kodak Kate started in surprise, her eyes opening wide.

"Not Deadwood Dick!"

"I'm nobody else," Dick assured.

"Then I've had honor enough for one day," declared the petite lady; "the honor of helping you. I dare not ask another question."

"Well, then, I'll volunteer a little more," Dick proffered. "I must caution you to silence, however—Yes, I know, but I mean among fellow detectives. I do not want my presence here to be known, unless I find it advisable to make it known."

"I understand. You may trust me."

"All right. Well, I am here to work up the Wynthorpe affair. My first card has been played and one trick gathered home—this picture. Now I must go ahead, with this small beginning, and see what more I can learn. And, as I said before, I may have occasion to call on you again for further aid."

"You know where to find me if you have need of my services, and I shall be only too happy to aid you. It will be a little mint for me if I can be the first one to give the affair to the papers after you have wound it up."

"You seem to look upon that as a foregone conclusion," remarked Dick. "Perhaps the procession will leave me, badly."

"I do not expect anything of the kind, if your reputation counts for anything at all."

Their business was ended, as was also their little chat, and the lady had risen.

"Oh! by the way," Dick suddenly observed, a thought striking him, "have you ever seen Judge Wynthorpe?"

"Yes, sir; I have seen him."

"Good. Can you describe him to me?"

"I can do better than that; I can show you a photograph of him."

"Excellent. I have got to talk with him, and do not want to call at his residence."

"But I haven't the picture with me, sir."

"Where can I see it?"

"At my home, if you will come there."

"I am at liberty to accompany you now, with your permission."

The permission was readily given, the pair left the room, and the lady passed down to the hall where she waited for Dick.

The latter soon joined her, and together they left the hotel and bent their steps in the direction of the lady's home, Dick partly in disguise with a false beard.

Dick had deemed it prudent to take this precaution. There was just the possible chance Kodak Kate had been seen to enter the hotel, though he had no real idea that such was the case.

When they set out, however, they were followed by a thin, dark-faced man, who had eyed their appearance with what seemed keen satisfaction.

He kept them in sight all the way to Kodak Kate's home, and there waited in hiding for the reappearance of one or both.

The walk had been a pleasing one to Dick, and his first good impression of the little female detective had been not only confirmed but strengthened.

Miss Burton's home was a modest one, where she lived alone with her widowed mother, whom she supported. Dick had called there once before, as we know, and this time felt at home.

The photograph of Judge Wynthorpe was shown to him, and he fixed the face upon his mind so that he would be able to recognize the judge anywhere.

He made the call a short one, and, after a little conversation with the detective and her mother, took leave of them.

During their talk he had inquired where Judge Wynthorpe lived, and upon leaving the house set out in the direction of his residence, wanting to see him if he had opportunity.

He still had on the false beard, and, as he went along, he thought of the uselessness of wearing it.

It was neither time nor place to remove it, however, so it had to be kept on for the present. But with that thought came the one that had prompted him to put it on in the first place.

"What if I have been followed," he reflected. "It isn't likely, I think, but it is possible. Since I took the precaution to put the beard on, I'll take the same precaution about taking it off again, just as though I knew I were followed."

And as he came to this decision, the thin, dark-faced man was not twenty steps behind him, bent upon shadowing him wherever he might go.

Dick was prepared for a lightning change, and resolved upon making it.

Besides the full beard, he had put on a silk opera hat, a thing he never wore unless in disguise.

A little further on was a hotel, and when he reached it he turned abruptly and entered its lobby, and proceeded down toward the interior rooms.

The lobby was semi-dark, and there, in a second's time, a transformation took place in Deadwood Dick's appearance. Off came the silk hat and beard, a soft hat was on, and the silk hat was flattened, the beard in it, and under his coat.

Along came the shadower, he of the dark face, and hurried in.

Dick was coming out, lighting a cigar as he advanced toward the door he had so recently entered.

The moment his eyes rested upon the thin, dark-faced individual, a suspicion flashed across his mind. The man's actions caused it to arise.

Upon entering the door he looked immediately toward the lighted interior, as if looking to see some one in particular, as was the case. Not seeing that person, a shade of disappointment came upon his face.

"Ha!" Dick silently exclaimed, "is it possible that I was being followed? It looks like it, but there is plenty of room to be mistaken."

"Did you see that gentleman who entered just ahead of me, sir?" the thin man inquired of him.

"Man with beard and high hat?" asked Dick, carelessly, tossing away the burnt match and puffing at his cigar pleasantly.

"Yes, yes," was the assurance.

"Passed him just as I was entering the hall," Dick readily fibbed.

"Thanks."

The man hastened on, and Dick glanced after him, smiling.

Suddenly a new thought struck the redoubtable Richard, and he put it into practice instantly.

His cloth hat disappeared, an English double-peak cap and flowing side-whiskers were on, the cigar was tossed aside, and he was yet another individual!

Now turning back again adjusting a glass to his eye at the same time, he followed the man who had been following him! It was about as neat a play as he had ever made.

"I'm sure of him, too," he mused. "If he hadn't questioned me I might have considered myself mistaken, and gone out about my business. Now my business is to see where he goes."

Reaching the brilliant bar-room, he stopped and looked around, and saw the thin dark-faced fellow dodging around briskly looking for his game. And Dick had to smile to note how disgusted he seemed to be.

The fellow looked into the reading-room, into the billiard-room and elsewhere about, and then turned to question one of the colored porters.

Not only one did he question, but several, but seemed to learn nothing whatever.

After interviewing the clerk, as a last chance, he went out.

Dick let him get a good start, and followed.

The man set off at a rapid walk, and to Dick's surprise led him straight to the hotel where Dick was stopping.

"This is getting hot," Dick told himself. "I'll give him a little lead and then I'll enter and see what he's up to. It is going to be a hot fight, that I'm sure, and I've got some tough customers to buck against. They are onto me already, in spite of all the care I have taken."

After a few moments Dick sauntered into the office, and went straight to the desk where the thin man was talking to the clerk.

"You say he hadn't a beard?" the man was saying.

"Nary a beard," was the terse answer. "Only a mustache."

Both glanced at Dick, as he leaned against the desk as if waiting to see the clerk. Neither gave him much attention, though, and the thin man not any. He did not remember seeing him at the other hotel, if he had seen him at all.

"It beats the deuce," the dark-faced individual muttered. "What name did you say he gave you?"

"He registered as Alex Reed of Denver."

"And you are sure he hadn't a beard, eh?"

"Hang it! of course I am sure, man. What are you coming at?"

"Well, I must be mistaken, that's all. Will you do me the favor to see if this Alex Reed is in his room now?"

Dick saw that there would be a leisure moment, perhaps, for the clerk, and not wanting to be addressed, turned away to look at some advertisements on the opposite side of the room.

The clerk sent a call-boy to room forty-two, and in a moment the lad was back with the report that the room was empty.

"That settles it," observed the thin man of the dark face. And without a word further he turned and went out. Dick followed, and shadowed him to a house in another part of the city. The silent shadower took note of the street and number, and returned straight to the hotel and to his room. There he laid off his disguise, paid his bill, and with valise in hand, took his leave.

CHAPTER IV.

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE SCENES.

AND let us take leave of him.

The interests of our story demand our attention elsewhere.

When the thin, dark-faced man had entered the house to which Dick shadowed him, he proceeded straight up-stairs.

On the second floor he stopped and knocked at the door of a room, and a voice bidding him enter, went in. Here were seated two men, one of whom was the original of the photograph Kodak Kate had bagged.

"Ha! it's Barnaby the Ferret," this man exclaimed.

"Yours to the boots," the dark-faced fellow acknowledged, waving his hand.

"And what word do you bring, Ferret Joe?" demanded the other man. "Did you get onto anything?"

"Yes, I got onto something," was the answer, "and I got off again, too. I was dumped overboard the nearest you ever saw."

"What! the Ferret flung over?"

"Yes, just as true as I'm Ferret Joe!"

The two men looked at each other, while he called the Ferret helped himself to a chair.

He of the pair who had first spoken was a man of thirty-five, about; tall and of ordinary good looks, wearing a full, short beard. The other was younger, not more than twenty-two, fair, with light mustache.

"I'll tell you how it was, Mr. Hepper," Barnaby, the Ferret, immediately added, addressing the elder of the pair.

"Yes, let's hear of it, by all means," he was encouraged. "It is something new for you to get left as you say you did, Ferret Joe."

"You are right it is; but I got left this time, and bad, too. But I holed my man, just the same, and I can ferret him out when I want him, so it isn't so bad, after all."

"No, not if that's the case," spoke the younger of the trio. "But let's hear your story."

"Here you have it. I was stationed at the post-office—opposite side of the street, you know. The latest move—the letters mailed for Denman Tremont—was to be nipped in the bud, if possible. We looked for a shrewd double play. You, Mr. Hepper, were to follow Denman Tremont, and my part was to follow any one who might follow you, and throw him off the track in one way or another."

"Yes, yes; we know all about that," interrupted the younger man. "Get on to the meat of what you have got to tell."

"Here you have that, too. A cab drew up to the post-office and stopped. No one got out or in. By and by an old man hove in sight. He went into the office. When he came out you were at his heels, Mr. Hepper. I knew you had your man, and I was on my muscle for the next move. Thought we had an easy case, but, skin me! if the old fellow didn't get into the cab and spin off like the wind. That stumped you for the minute, but you soon took out after the cab, and then I peeled my eyes to see if any one had any interest in you!"

"You are slow, Joe, provokingly slow," urged the younger man.

"And your interruptions do not help him on any, Ethan," put in Hepper. "Let him come at it his own way."

"Which is what you'll have to do," declared the Ferret. "But I'm at the interesting point now. Just as you turned to take after that cab, Mr. Hepper, I caught on to something that woke me up, you bet! There had been some women standing by the steps, talking, and I hadn't taken any particular notice of them. They went on about the time the cab started off, all but one, and she seemed to have been behind the others. I saw her look after you with something of a smile when you turned, and giving her a second look, I recognized her. It was Kodak Kate!"

"Kodak Kate!" exclaimed the two men at once.

"As big as life," assured Ferret Joe; "and ten to one she had bagged your phiz, though I didn't see anything of her little joker. She might have had it under her cloak, though, and it's pretty certain she had."

"Well, you followed her, of course," spoke Hepper, confident on that point.

"You might be sure of that. I followed her to the studio of the nearest photographer, and then I was next to sure that she had bagged you. She was in there quite a little time, and when she came out she went straight to the — Hotel. I waited and watched, and presently she came out of there, accompanied by a man, a rather good-looking fellow with full beard and wearing a high hat. He accompanied Kate to her home, was there a little while, came out alone and went straight to another hotel, the —. I was only a little distance behind him, went in right after him, but hang me if he hadn't disappeared as slick and clean as though he had melted away in smoke."

"That is rather strange, for a man of your detective experience."

"I should say so. But, that is the fact of it, much as I hate to have to own up to it. He threw me overboard neck and heels."

"But you said you had him holed," reminded the youngest of the trio.

"Yes, and so I have. I went back to the — Hotel and interviewed the clerk. The man is there, has room forty-two, and is registered as Alex Reed of Denver. All I have got to do is to lie in wait for him there, you see."

"And you think he is a detective, and on the case, do you?" questioned the man Hepper.

"Why, of course; that is as plain as day. And ten to one he is the old cock who took the letters out of the post-office, too. Kodak Kate and the false beard are all we need in proof of what he is."

"I guess you are right. But, what is going to be done about it?"

"That is the question now," put in the young man.

"You want me to suggest?" queried Barnaby the Ferret.

"Exactly."

"Well, then, we must keep our weather-eye upon Kodak Kate. She is against us now, that seems sure, though it is possible that she was engaged for only the one point she played in the game. Then I must go for this Alex Reed, as he signs himself, learn who he is, and size him up. If he proves dangerous, he must put in a disappearance—that is all there is about that."

"Don't it strike you that we have lost a point?" interrogated Hepper.

"Such is the humiliating fact, Mr. Hepper."

"After all our care to stop those letters at the post-office, too. Seems to me, Joe, that you are bucking against a detective this time who is going to give us trouble unless we can choke him off."

"The same idea has come to me, I own."

"But who can he be?"

"I give it up."

"Likely to prove a stranger here, I should say."

"That is what I take him to be. But, I'll soon get after him, when he returns to the hotel. I'll shadow that shadow—bet your boots and hat!"

"And you are not able to throw any light upon it, Gowlrey, are you?" to the young man of the party.

"Have I got to caution you again against using that name?" was the immediate and not gentle demand. "Call me Ethan Maybrooke or nothing."

"All right, Mr. Maybrooke; accept my humble apology," in a rather facetious tone and manner. "Being alone here, I didn't think it made any great amount of difference."

"It does make a difference, none the less. Use care here and you won't be likely to make a slip at any other time. No, to answer your question, I am not able to throw any light upon it, or at any rate not much. As I have told you, the judge has been corresponding considerably of late without any of my help, and has received letters from the Territory where his friend, the governor, holds reign."

"Yes, but that is all stale news now. What we are after is to learn who this new detective is, and, if there is likely to be danger from him, to dispose of him in short order."

"And that is what we will set about doing at once," put in Ferret Joe. "I'll go right back and take up the trail where I laid it down, and I'll soon know all about this new Vidocq. He'll not shake me off again, if I know myself."

"It puzzles me to know how he was aware that you were after him at all," remarked Hepper. "That is of small importance, however, compared with the fact. But, see here; I am hardly safe if he has got a picture of me, as you seem to think."

"That's so; you'll have to disguise."

"Which won't be easy. I don't want to shave off, and I can't well put another beard over this one. I'm no detective, you know."

"Well, then, you'll have to keep shady and take chances, that's all. But I will soon have the boys after this fellow, and his name will be Dennis before he knows what's up."

"But, see here," cried the young man, "what am I to say in answer to the judge's note to you, Hepper? He offers a clean hundred thousand for his wife."

"We can't accept, of course. Ha, ha!"

"And, more's the pity," sighed Ferret Joe.

"Still it might be played, I suppose," reflected Hepper. "It would be a rich joke, eh?"

"Couldn't do it," declared the young man. "They would nab us before we got the money."

"I suppose so, confound it! How would it do to lay the matter before your worthy dad, Mr. Maybrooke?"

"And how would you do that, and be behind the bars of State's Prison? That would be to give the detectives a new hold upon us, and we might get dumped."

"The boy is right," Ferret Joe took sides. "It must be the first plan or none. What would a hundred thousand be, compared with Madoc pardoned and our plan to go through the mint carried out?"

"That's so, that's so. Well, tell him it's no use, Ethan. Hold him right to the scratch. He must get the pardon of Madoc Gowlrey, or he'll never see his pretty wife again. Ha! ha! ha! What if he could guess the whole truth!"

"Which he never will," added the young man; and taking up paper that lay before him on the table, he wrote something on it, sealed it in an envelope and directed to Judge Wynthorpe.

That done he rose to go.

"This may be my last call here," he said.

"Yes, you want to take extra care," cautioned Hepper.

"I know it. Only got here this time by the skin of my teeth. Don't suppose there is any suspicion against me! Still, I must take the same care as if there was."

He moved to the door.

"Keep us posted," admonished Hepper. "You can do that."

"Yes, it's easy to do that. I think we'll win yet, if we hold out."

With that the young man was gone, and Ferret Joe went soon after, but each taking an opposite direction. Hepper remained alone. Secure he felt, but little did he dream that Deadwood Dick was soon to pay him a visit.

CHAPTER V.

DICK SCORES A BIG POINT.

Deadwood Dick was not idle meanwhile. Leaving one hotel, he immediately sought another.

This time he registered as Ward Howell, giving his residence as Tacoma.

Going at once to the room assigned to him, he immediately wrote a note to Kodak Kate.

He warned her that she was being shadowed, cautioned her against going to the Hotel, and gave his present alias and address.

The note finished, he made sure his several disguises were ready for use at short notice, and went down to the office. There he procured a special delivery stamp, and passing out, posted his letter.

That done and off his hands and mind, he set out in the direction of Judge Wynthorpe's residence.

"Well, here I am, taking a new start," he

mused as he went along. "I have played the first inning, so to say, and am ready for the second. There is a wide difference between detective work in a city and the same in the mountain wilds. But I am at home in both fields, for my experience has been varied enough to satisfy 'most any one.'"

"But let me sum up what I have gained so far. I expected to draw blood the first move, and sure enough I did, and more than I hoped for. I made the judge's post-office scheme serve my purpose well. I have a picture of one of the men who, if not himself one of the rascals, is one of their tools; I have detected their detective, as that thin, black-and-tan fellow must be. What is more, it came about so neatly that I was able to follow him to his hole—Ha! that's so; I must give that house some attention, but not just now."

And so he mused, running the points over in mind until he came opposite the judge's residence.

Now he was walking slowly, and took a careful survey of the house.

He had come nearly opposite, when the door opened and the judge himself came out.

He glanced up and down the street, and after that descended the steps and headed in the same direction Dick was going.

"I'm just in time," thought Dick. "Now to get a word with him, if I can do it without giving myself away to any one who may be watching."

He looked carefully about, taking note of every person in sight.

There was not one who was giving the judge any attention whatever; nor one whom Dick could suspect of playing detective.

But now he had had one lesson against trusting anything to appearances. He must play every point with as much care as though sure he was shadowed every moment.

Dick did not consider it worth while to watch the judge to learn where he was going. It was not likely that he was making any movements he would wish to conceal. The main thing was to speak to him without drawing notice.

The judge was smoking. He was an inveterate smoker, and was seldom without a weed in his mouth when out of doors.

Dick noted this, and it offered an excuse for addressing him, and one that he adopted.

Taking a cigar from his pocket, he increased his pace a little and crossed the street.

He timed his movements so that he reached the other side at the right moment.

As he stepped upon the corner he met the judge face to face.

"Pardon me, sir," he addressed him, "but will you oblige me with a light? I see you have it handy."

The request was so civil and polite that no one would have thought of refusing, and least of all Judge Wynthorpe.

"Why, certainly," he answered; "help yourself. If you enjoy smoking as well as I do, I am willing to promote your pleasure. Here you are."

He had knocked the ashes from his cigar while speaking, and now handed it to Dick in prime order.

Dick took it and lighted his cigar, and handed it back, saying:

"Thank you, Judge Wynthorpe; and now just a word with you, but do not let it appear that you are interested or surprised; I am your detective; have got the letters out of the post-office; am on the track of your enemies already; hope to get my grip upon them soon. You must not, positively must not, yield one point to them, sir. Don't talk too earnestly, now; let it appear that we met by chance."

With his closing words Dick stepped back, as if ready to go right on his way.

"You say you are the man Bristol, sent here by Governor Woodlow?" the judge questioned.

"I am he, sir," Dick reassured.

"You amaze me, man. I must talk with you. Can you hold out any hope at all for me?"

"Plenty of it, sir!" Dick assured. "I have got my eye upon some of the rascals already, as I said. But this is not the place for a talk. We must part, for we may be watched."

"What of it if we are? Haven't we—"

"But it might spoil my work in your interest, sir. By the note you sent me, after you mailed the letter, I judged that you were about in despair, and ready to yield. Whatever you do don't do that. Be firm as adamant; make no concessions. But I must move on, much as I would like to talk with you."

"Hang it, man, can't we turn into one of these by-streets and walked together and talk about this matter a little?"

Dick had been having his eyes well about him while they talked, but nothing of a suspicious nature was discovered.

He wanted to have further talk, very much indeed.

"Yes, I'll risk it," he quickly decided. "Come up, and we'll take a walk in this direction."

So they set out, turning into one of the by-streets and paying little attention to the direction they were taking.

This street was almost deserted, and when they had gone a little distance Dick stopped short, looked back and watched for some moments, but seeing no "shadow" he concluded that the coast was clear. And so it was; no one had any interest in them.

"Now," Dick observed, as they went on, "we must crowd everything into this one interview. We may not get opportunity for another. Is there anything new you can inform me of?"

"You were right in thinking that I was about in despair, and ready to give up. I have taken a step that may turn the matter into a new channel, for good or bad, I know not which. I have offered to buy my wife's freedom!"

"It is not likely that your offer will be accepted, though it may be. They will be afraid it is a trick to trap them, you see. But, what kind of an offer have you made them?"

"I have promised them a clean hundred thousand dollars, nearly all that I am worth in the world, if they will restore my wife to me safe and sound."

"And you have not heard from them yet in answer?"

"No; not yet."

"To whom did you address your letter, and where?"

"I addressed it to one Martin Garble, No. — Vallejo street."

"That is a pointer. I shall remember the street and number, and see if it will lead to anything."

"Little good it will do you," the judge declared. "The police have been to the place, and decoy letters have been sent there, but no such person as Martin Garble was ever heard of at that number."

"Well, that is strange, certainly. And yet, every letter you send that is not a decoy has been delivered, eh?"

"Nearly every one, sir."

"That looks like crooked work on the part of the postman."

"Yes, it looks so, but it isn't so. Every time he is given a decoy letter he does his best to deliver it."

"There is more in this case than appears on the surface, Judge Wynthorpe, and you can depend on that. The more I see of it the deeper it looks."

"And deep it is, too. But, tell me, Mr. Bristol, what have I to hope? Can you see any chance for defeating these villains and of rescuing my wife from their infernal grasp?"

"You have everything to hope, sir. I have confidence enough in myself to say that I believe I shall be able to cope with them and to hunt them out of their holes. All I ask is a fair chance at them."

"Well, you shall have it."

"Then you will hold out against them?"

"I will, until you have had a fair test in the case. If you fail, then I intend to come to their terms, if it will do any good."

"Well, there is one favor I want to ask of you."

"And what is that?"

"That you will allow me just ten days. Whether you hear from me or not, and no matter what the pressure is they put upon you, hold your own against them. Will you do this?"

"Yes, I will."

"And if by any chance they should accept the offer you have made them, tell them they must give you time, and not less than ten days."

"I'll do that, too; but don't you want to know it if they should offer to accept the terms?"

"What I was going to speak about. Are you good at remembering names?"

"Yes, decidedly good, sir."

"Very well. In case they should accept, though I don't expect they will, drop a blank postal to Ward Howell at the — House. And see that you write the address on the postal in strict privacy, and allow no one to see it. Post it with your own hands. I have a suspicion that you have an enemy in your own house."

"I have thought it must be so, but it seems impossible, for I do not see who it can be. All my servants are long in service with me, and I

would trust them to almost any extent. My son is not at the house often, but of course he is not to be considered in such a suspicion. As for my secretary, he is a relation of my wife's, and feels as bad about the matter as I do, almost."

"You have a secretary, eh? Will you tell me his name?"

"His name is Ethan Maybrooke."

"And how long has he been with you, sir?"

"Almost four years. But he is faithful and honest. No use looking to him for anything."

"No, I suppose not," Dick agreed. "But, tell me, Mr. Wynthorpe," he added, "do you know this person?" And he handed him the photograph which Kodak Kate had bagged that morning.

"Heavens! It is my son, Alban Wynthorpe!" the judge exclaimed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TANGLE WORSE TANGLED.

THIS was stronger than Dick had expected.

Would it do to let the judge know the truth, then?

He considered not, and gave the negative the benefit of the doubt.

"Your son, eh?" he quietly observed. "Glad to know that, sir. No use suspecting him, then."

"Where and how did you get hold of this photograph of him?" the judge questioned. "Has suspicion pointed at my son?"

"It might have looked in his direction, sir, I admit, had I not learned who the man is. He was at the post-office when I took the letters out. He was loitering there, and my assistant took a snap-shot picture of him."

The judge looked troubled.

"Can it be possible that he has anything to do with it?" he mused aloud.

"That is for you to determine," answered Dick. "You know him, while I do not. But, I would not think so, being your own son."

"No, of course not, of course not," the judge was fain to believe. "I might as soon suspect myself. How did you come to make such a blunder as that, Mr. Bristol?"

It was a bitter pill for Dick, this, but he choked it down.

"My helper did it," he explained. "Had instructions, you see, to take the picture of any one who might be idling around the office when I called for the letters. It does not signify anything that your son happened to be there at the moment. No need to let him know anything about it, sir, and here goes the picture."

Dick had received the photograph back from the judge's hand, and now he tore it in small fragments and tossed it to the wind.

As he did so he noted that this action on his part seemed to be a relief to the judge. Was there some suspicion in the judge's mind? He could not determine that, but he could afford to dispose of the photograph now.

"I am glad your suspicion has been removed," the judge declared. "But you told me you have your eye upon the rascals; was it to my son that you referred when you said that? Does this disclosure knock away the hope you have raised in my mind?"

"Not by any means, sir," Dick assured. "I have my eye upon another man, and concerning whom there is no doubt. I would not have made the assertion without good foundation."

They talked on, and their walk was of considerable length.

Finally, when Dick had got all the points he could, and when he had impressed the judge as he desired, he was ready to take leave of him.

"You will excuse me," he remarked abruptly, stopping, "if I part company with you here."

"Why, certainly, if you find it necessary, so suddenly," was the response.

"And I do. Bear in mind our agreement. Observe every point!"

"You may rely upon my doing so, Mr. Bristol."

"Good. And now adieu for the present—Hold on, though, and I'll step in here first."

Dick was playing a sure hand. He must be certain that they had not been followed or shadowed, but if they had been, he meant to fool their shadower if he could. So, with his last word to the judge he turned abruptly and entered a cigar store in front of which they had stopped.

In turning, he had tossed away the stump of the cigar he had been smoking, and the judge naturally inferred that he meant to procure another.

This was the very impression Dick wanted to make upon their possible watcher, and it undoubtedly would have been a successful ruse, had there been a shadower to be played upon.

The cigar-store had a glass door, curtained. No sooner had Dick stepped inside than he took off his hat, thrust it under his coat, drawing out at the same time the opera-hat and false beard, and donning them.

Barely fifteen seconds of time did this lightning change consume, and, after a hasty glance into a handy mirror, the prince of all-around detectives opened the door and stepped out, leaving the proprietor of the shop standing with gaping mouth, almost paralyzed with astonishment.

In going out, Dick glanced at the judge and saw that he was not recognized.

The judge merely looked up when the door opened, and, seeing a stranger, gave him no thought whatever.

One minute he waited, two minutes, and finally it had run along to five, and by that time he was wondering what could be keeping his detective so long.

After yet another minute had passed, and still Dick did not appear, he stepped to the door and looked in. No one was there save the proprietor, and he was still gazing at the door.

"Where is the man who came in here a few minutes ago?" the judge inquired.

"Mein Gott in Himmil!" exclaimed the cigar-vender, throwing up his hands in his great earnestness, "dot man vas t'e tuyfel hisself!"

"What do you mean, my good man?" asked the judge, wondering what was coming in explanation of the Teuton's excited words and manner. "What did he do?"

"Vat did he do? Py chin, he shtep in mein blace, take him his head off so gwick as a vink unt put on another, unt oud he go again. Id vas Doctor Hyckle unt Mister Jack, py chin id vas!"

The truth now dawned upon the judge's mind, and his respect for Deadwood Dick as a detective rose to summer heat.

It was something he would never have deemed possible if he hadn't witnessed it.

Buying a cigar, to make up for Dick's lack, in that regard, he departed.

In the meantime Dick was well on his way to another part of the city, intending to visit the house to which he had shadowed the thin, dark-faced fellow upon whom he had so neatly turned the tables.

"This case grows deeper and heavier at every step," he reflected as he went along. "Who could have dreamed that the judge's own son is in it? But, so he is, and no getting over that fact."

In due time he was at his destination, or near it, and stopped to make yet another change in his appearance.

Should he encounter the thin, dark-faced man, while in the high hat and beard, he knew that he must certainly be recognized.

Stepping into the hallway of a house he made the necessary change, and came forth the Englishman in side-whiskers and double-peaked cap, with the glass over his eye.

Glancing into a pocket-mirror to make sure that he was all right, and feeling of his weapons to be certain that they were in place, if wanted, he went on to the house and mounted the steps and tried the door.

It was unlocked, but he opened it silently, entered, and then paused to listen.

He heard nothing. The house was silent.

Ferret Joe and Ethan Maybrooke had been gone some minutes.

Presently Dick stepped softly to the nearest door and tried it carefully.

It opened upon an empty room, and he concluded that the lower floor was not occupied.

A little further examination proved this to be the case, and he proceeded up-stairs, using the same caution.

Listening, when he had gained the top, he still heard nothing, and tried another door. This opened like those below, but here the room was occupied.

Dick opened the door just a very little, silently, and he saw a man lying on a lounge, smoking. He recognized him immediately as the original of the snap-shot photograph!

The man was reading, and his face was not full toward the door, so Dick opened the door further to see if there was any one else with him. Finding no one else there he threw the door open wide and stepped in.

Alban Hepper dropped his book and sprung to his feet with a frightened bound, uttering a curse in doing so.

"Who in blazes are you?" he demanded, his hand at his hip.

"Hi 'ope Hi don't bintrude," responded Dick, blandly, closing the door after him and advancing carelessly.

Hepper eyed him closely, trying hard to recognize him, since it must certainly be a friend, as he reasoned; but he failed in doing so, and Dick helped himself to a chair.

"But you do intrude, though," the man cried. "Tell me who you are, or get out of here."

"Bless me, Mr. Wynthorpe, don't you know me?" Dick demanded, in well-feigned surprise.

This caused the man to stare at him harder than ever.

"No, I'll be hanged if I do," Hepper cried.

"Well, then, sit down hand we'll 'ave ha talk. Hi'm Barton McKays, hat your service."

The name Dick gave was that of the missing police detective.

"Thunder and lightning!" cried the man, and his hand appeared from his hip with a weapon in it.

Quick as was that move, Deadwood Dick's was a good deal quicker. He had the drop in a flash, with two revolvers aimed full at the man's heart.

"Stop!" he warned, "or I'll plug you! I'm not here to be fooled with, as you will find out. Drop that gun!"

The man hesitated, his muscles twitching.

"Drop it, I say," Dick repeated, "or I'll shoot."

The weapon was allowed to fall to the floor, and Hepper sat down.

"How in blazes did you get away?" he asked.

Deadwood Dick had gained a point. He knew from this that McKays had not been killed, but was a prisoner.

Dick had calculated this play on his way to the house. He had seen a picture of the missing officer in an illustrated paper, and believed he could pass for him in disguise, at a pinch.

He had no other excuse to offer for his coming into the house, and thought to kill two birds with one stone, as it were—that is, to learn whether McKays was living or dead, and at the same time learn who lived in the house.

But now, of a sudden, a new thought came to him.

He had not hoped to find Alban Wynthorpe here and alone, but, since he had, it might be possible to force a point.

"No matter how I got away," he responded; "let it be enough for you to know that I am here on business. You are my prisoner, Alban Wynthorpe, and I'm going to take you dead or alive. Still, I will offer you one chance for your liberty."

CHAPTER VII.

DICK HAS A LIVELY TUSSELE.

DICK had dropped his forced dialect; and his voice had its full, grim, determined ring.

The man "Hepper" paled as he looked into the threatening tubes.

"What is the chance you will offer me?" he inquired. "You have it all your own way, it seems."

"It looks so, and that's the fact. You know my reputation is at stake in this matter, and I'm willing to make concessions on account of that."

"Very well, let me know your terms and I'll see about accepting them. Don't think I'm afraid of your killing me, for I know you wouldn't do that, unless in a fight to save yourself."

"I'll kill you if you resist arrest, as sure as you're born," Dick threatened. "But, here is the offer I'll make you: You tell me where your father's wife is, and let me have her and restore her, and I'll let you go free."

Dick had no thought that the fellow would do anything of the kind, but he did hope he would betray the hiding-place of the prisoners, one or both.

"Can't do that," was the immediate response.

"What's the reason you can't do it?" Dick demanded.

"Because you're asking too much, that's all."

"Do you prefer to be arrested?"

"Yes, against that."

Dick knew that he had a bad man to deal with, and that the situation was an awkward one.

He did not want to arrest the fellow, for that would force a disclosure he did not wish to make, and spoil a clew.

No, he must have the man at large, if he hoped to discover anything through him. Still he was not ready to give up without trying to force further clews from him.

He was about to speak, when the door below was heard to open and heavy steps were heard on the stairs.

Instantly a smile lighted up Hepper's face,

and Dick knew the coming persons were his friends. The situation looked a little serious.

"Who is coming?" Dick demanded, sharply.

"You will soon see," was the answer.

Dick got up and backed away to the wall behind the door, still keeping his man covered.

The door opened about the time he had taken his position there, and two men walked into the room, unsuspecting.

"Hands up!" cried Dick, as soon as they were in.

They turned, their faces blanched, and took in the situation.

As they hesitated to obey promptly, and Dick could read resistance in their faces, he emphasized the order.

This time their hands went up, and with his weapons at their heads Dick bade them back to the place where Hepper was and take seats with him on the lounge.

"Three of a kind," Dick remarked, smiling.

"Who in blazes be you?" one of the new pair demanded.

"Don't you know him?" snarled Hepper. "He is McKays, and curse you for letting him escape."

"McKays be blowed!" cried the pair both at once. No McKays about him. We have got McKays all right, you bet we have!"

Hepper looked foolish at this information.

Deadwood Dick was in luck, and felt like shaking hands with himself.

Here another clew had popped right up in his path, by chance as it seemed, but really the outcome of his shrewd playing.

Not only had he now seen two more of the precious rascals, but knew them to be the men who had McKays in custody, and undoubtedly the judge's wife as well!

But, it was not all in his favor, by any means. He had the drop on them, and could hold it as long as he desired: but could he arrest the three, should he want to, or get away himself without a fight?

"Not McKays!" Hepper ejaculated.

"In course not," he was assured. "We jest kem from where he is."

"That's the fact," supported the other.

"Then I wonder who I am?" laughed Dick.

"If I'm not McKays I'm going to get him; that you may depend on."

"I don't know how you expect to do it," disputed Hepper. "You have got a bigger load on your shoulders now than you had a minute ago."

"You have got to take me to where he is," declared Dick. "If you won't do that I'll try my hand at shooting your buttons off. Maybe you will come to terms after I try a shot or two."

How it might have terminated is difficult to say.

Suddenly and without warning something happened that spoiled Dick's advantage instantly.

A leg of the chair upon which he sat down as he was speaking gave way, and over he went, and it required his best effort to keep from falling.

As it was, he caught upon his feet, but the rascals had been quick to take advantage of the opportunity. Their weapons were instantly drawn and they had reversed the order of things considerably.

"Up with your hands!" they cried, triumphantly.

There was but one chance for Dick, and he knew it.

And that chance was, to fight his way out of there as quickly as possible.

He had taken in the situation, even before he had quite recovered himself from falling, and before the order was given.

Quite simultaneously with the order came snap-shots from his ready weapons. The arm of one of the fellows dropped powerless to his side, while the revolver of another went spinning out of his grasp!

But, they were three against one, and Dick knew that this was not the end of it. He would have to hustle if he expected to get out of there alive, now. They were howling and cursing, and ready to make for him more determinedly.

With a bound he caught up a round table that stood in the center of the apartment, having thrust one of his weapons into a pocket to enable him to do so, and lifting it as though it were but a toy Dick shielded himself behind it and ran for the door.

Half a dozen shots were sent spinning after him, and the bullets tore into the table, which fortunately had a double top, and he even felt one of them strike him in the back, but its force was spent and it did no harm. In one second or less he was at the door, in another he

was outside; then, dropping the table, he sprung down the stairs four steps at a stride.

Before the rascals could pick themselves up, after falling over the table he had dropped in the doorway, he was down-stairs, and, in a second more, had thrown open the front door. But, he did not go out. A glance back showed him that the fellows had not yet appeared at the top, and as he opened the door he stepped behind it.

This was a daring thing to do, but, Deadwood Dick was a daring man. In another moment the rascals came thundering down the stairs, and seeing the open door they had no thought but that their enemy had gone outside.

Out they sprung, the man with the disabled arm cursing and groaning dismally with every breath, vowing what he would do if he could but lay hands upon the invincible detective.

When they looked out, though, and could not see their man, they were not a little surprised.

"Where did he go to?" demanded one.

"It don't seem as though he had time to reach the corner," remarked Hepper.

"That's what he done jest the same, though," averred the third. "He was goin' like blue lightning!"

Making quite sure that their man had got out of sight, they turned back into the hall.

Deadwood Dick stood ready for further fight, if necessary. Both of his trusty revolvers were in his grip.

The excited men, without a thought of the door, all passed up-stairs, and Dick was not discovered! There was not a grain of suspicion that he had not left the house. The open door was proof enough for it.

As soon as they had closed the door of the room above, Dick crept silently up the stairs again, to learn what they would have to say. It was with this in view that he had remained in the house.

If he went out, he had reasoned, there would be no going back, and he would probably never have a better chance to learn something than this.

"That was a close shave," he mused, "but I'm none the worse for it. And now, maybe I'll get hold of something that will repay me for my trouble. This thing grows hotter all the time."

Reaching the hall above, he looked around to decide where he should play the eavesdropper. If he remained in the hall, discovery was almost sure to follow, and he did not want to get into a room where he could be cornered.

A little further along was another door, and he advanced and tried that. It opened, disclosing a dark room.

As he opened the door Dick could hear the voices of the men more plainly than in the hall.

Going in, he closed the door carefully and listened.

"I don't know who he was," one fellow was saying, "but I know he winged me bad, and I'm on the shelf."

"And you know he wasn't McKays, do you?" questioned Hepper.

"Hang it, of course! He is safe enough in the cellar, at the other den."

"But did you see him just before you came here?"

"Not five minutes before."

"That settles it, then. A new detective is on our track, sure enough, and one who is going to give us trouble if we don't look out. We have got to disappear from here just as quick as possible."

"And the quicker the better, too."

"You bet it is!"

"We'll go at once. It won't do to stay here ten minutes. We'll have to abandon everything and drop right out, and not one of us must ever show his nose here again."

"That's the fact; and I've got to go to a doctor with this arm of mine, and I'm goin' now."

The men set out from the room. Two were to go to the places spoken of as the other den, while the wounded man was going to have his arm attended to.

And while Dick listened to their plans he made a change in his appearance, and prepared to shadow the two who were going to the house where Detective McKays was imprisoned.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLEVER PLAYING ALL AROUND.

It had been a hasty departure.

There had been a hurried gathering up of personal effects.

That done, the men were up and off, fearing to remain there a minute longer than necessary.

They believed that the detective, whoever he was, would soon be back with a force of policemen at his heels to take them.

Little did they imagine that their man had not left the house at all, but was preparing to follow them to their other rendezvous as soon as they started.

Dick knew that none of these three had seen him in his proper person, or in his disguise of beard and high hat, so he adopted the disguise mentioned, not wanting to risk chance recognition.

There was one thing that gave him some concern.

He was afraid the men might lock the door after them as they left the house.

By the time they were in the lower hall he was at the top of the stairs, and much to his satisfaction he saw them file out and leave the door unfastened.

Dick hastened down, then, and opened the door a little to peer out.

The men were hurrying off down the street at a rapid walk.

They were talking excitedly, and were not likely to look back, so Dick opened the door wider and sprung out.

Once on the street he did not care if they did did turn round. It was in leaving the house that to be seen would have been bad for his cause.

At the very first corner the men turned, and Dick going on, crossed the same street and still kept them in sight. At the corner they had looked back, but a good many persons were in the street, and it was not likely they had suspected him.

They went on in company for some distance, but finally stopped, held a short conference, and separated, Alban Wynthorpe, or "Hepper," going in one direction alone, while the other men went off together in another.

Dick decided quickly that he would follow Alban Wynthorpe.

And it had to be a quick decision, for there was little time to study the point.

Following him, he might not come immediately to the place where Detective McKays, and possibly Mrs. Wynthorpe, was imprisoned, but he might learn something of as much importance.

Besides, he seemed to be at the head of the evil set, and sooner or later the others would be around him again.

Such was his decision, and Dick acted upon it.

The man was a fast walker, and rapidly passed into a respectable part of the city as compared with that from which he had just come.

Finally he slackened his pace before the door of a neat private house, and was about to ascend the steps when he stopped short, looking up the street.

Dick followed his gaze, and saw a veiled woman approaching.

The woman was in semi-mourning, and was closely veiled, so that nothing of her face was to be seen.

Detective Dick saw her give a very slight motion of the hand, as if a signal to the man at the steps, and she came on and joined him.

They grasped hands when they met, and going up the steps then, entered the house together.

"Another woman in the case, eh?" thought Dick.

Of course he had no clew to aid him in guessing who it might be.

If he could have known he would have been thoroughly amazed, and would have considered it about the strangest case he had ever had anything to do with.

The door closed behind the couple, and Dick was on the outside. For the time being it looked as though the trail was at an end.

He passed on, leisurely, looking at the house as he passed, and taking note of the number and street.

Here was work for Kodak Kate, he decided.

It might be hard to convince Judge Wynthorpe that his son was such a rascal.

If Kodak Kate could get a few of her snap shots at him, at the right time to make the pictures telling proof against him, it would be an excellent thing.

Dick resolved to call her to his aid for this purpose immediately.

With that idea in mind he stepped into a stationery store at hand and wrote a note.

In the meantime Ferret Joe had gone with all haste back to the — Hotel.

Entering with due precaution, he inquired of the clerk whether Mr. Alex Reed had yet returned.

Imagine his surprise when he was told that the gentleman had gone, and gone for good.

"Gone!" he cried.
 "Yes, sir; gone," he was assured.
 "You can't mean it."
 "What's the reason I can't?" demanded the clerk.

"I mean it's a strange thing that he should be gone so soon."

"Can't help how strange it is, it's the fact, and now don't bother me any more about him."

"But I must bother you a little more," persisted the Ferret. "Can you tell me where he went to from here? Did he not say where he was going?"

"No, sir; simply paid his bill like a man and went off."

"Well, it beats the deuce, that's all."

With that the thin, dark-faced detective wheeled about and left the office.

But he was not quite done yet. The idea had entered his head that perhaps the clerk had lied to him.

Maybe the man was even then in his room, and had instructed the clerk to say he had gone away. The Ferret meant to be sure about that.

Going out of the office he passed immediately to the family entrance of the house, opened the door and went in.

Successful so far, he went up-stairs as boldly as though he owned the whole place.

Catching the run of the numbers, he soon found room forty-two.

The door stood partly open, and he went in.

His only reward for his pains was the proof that the clerk had told him the truth. It was certain that this room had no occupant now.

Greatly discomfited, Barnaby the Ferret left the room and the house, and bent his steps again in the direction of the den where he had recently come from.

His pride had taken a great fall.

And it would drop still lower if he had to return and own to his defeat.

With a sudden new thought in mind, he decided to go to the hotel where he had first lost sight of his man.

Accordingly he set out for that place, and arriving there, went to the clerk and inquired about new arrivals. But there had been none within two hours.

Balked again, he set out once more, after a careful search around, knowing that he would have to go and own up that he had been cleverly outwitted at his own game, much as he disliked it.

Without further delay he set out for the place where he had left his worthy superior in evil deeds, Alban Hepper.

Coming in sight of the house, a startling sight met his gaze as he turned the corner.

Just coming down the steps was the very man he had been looking for!

"By the great unwashed!" he ejaculated, "what is the meaning of this? That man is a very devil at detective work. How did he ever get onto this? And what has he been doing here? Ha!"

Looking ahead further, he saw the three men whom Dick was following.

Dick had no suspicion that anything of this sort had come about, and had no idea that he would be shadowed himself.

"There's music in the air now," muttered Ferret Joe. "Things have got to be brought to a focus, and that mighty soon, or there will be the dickens to pay. You are in a box now, my fine fellow," meaning Dick, "and I'd like to see you shake me off again if you can."

On they went, Ferret Joe using all the care possible, though little care was necessary under the circumstances.

And so it was kept up, to the point where Alban Hepper took leave of his two companions.

Ferret Joe remained in the background till they had gone on their way again.

"Something has been to pay," he told himself. "What's the matter with Hub's arm? I'll find out. It is safe to let the detective go for a minute, for Hub and his pard must know where Alban is going, and I can soon pick up the trail. But it won't be necessary to lose it, for I can speak to the men in a minute, and I want their help now anyhow."

As soon as Alban Hepper and his shadower had gone on, Ferret Joe ran after the other two, and soon came up with them.

"Look there!" he exclaimed, pointing at Dick, "do you see that man?"

"What man?" the fellows demanded.

"That fellow following the captain; fellow in high hat and beard."

"Yes; what of him?"

"Well, he's that cursed detective."

"The deuce he is! How did he get after us?"

"That's more than I can tell; he just followed you out of the house."

"Followed us out of the house! Get out. Your brain is full of bugs. Can't be possible."

"But it is possible, just the same. Come, though, and let's be after him. We have got to do away with him in short order, somehow."

"You will have to count me out," declared the one with the wounded arm.

"What's the matter with your arm, Hub?" Joe asked.

"Matter enough," the fellow growled. "I got a bullet in it. But Webb can tell you all about it. I've got to find a doctor."

"Come, then, Webb," Ferret Joe urged, "for there's no time to lose. We must down this man or he'll down us."

So parting company with the wounded man, they set out on the track of Deadwood Dick.

And as they went along, Webb Daylow—that being the man's name—told all about the *melee* at the den.

Barnaby the Ferret could hardly believe the story, but there was the other man's wounded arm in support of it, and he had to believe.

One thing they were forced to realize, and that was that now they had a man to fight against who seemed a little more than a match for them, or had proved himself so up to the present.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK GETS A NEW POINTER.

ONE thing troubled Ferret Joe.

That was that the detective was following Alban Hepper.

He was sure to go straight to the chief rendezvous, and in fact Webb Daylow knew he was going there.

"I'd like to put a bullet into him," Daylow hissed.

"And so would I," declared the Ferret. "But it can't be done here."

"No, and I don't see as we kin balk his game yet, do you?"

"No. Seems he's bound to follow Hepper home."

"But we'll attend to him after that, hey?"

"You can just bet we will."

And with threats such as these, they kept on the track with determination to work ill to the unknown enemy of their scheme if they could do it.

Finally they saw Hepper stop at the steps of the house, as described, saw the woman join him and go in with him, and then they followed on after the detective, and when Deadwood Dick went into the stationery store they were not far away.

Ferret Joe advanced and peered in at a window, when Dick did not come out again immediately, and saw him writing his letter.

The letter done, Dick procured a special stamp for it, having directed it carefully.

He was about to go out, when a postman entered and he gave the letter to him.

This Ferret Joe did not see, having withdrawn from the window.

Dick followed the postman out, and looked around.

For the moment he was undecided.

The game required care.

Ferret Joe and Webb Daylow were out of sight, but where they could watch their man unseen.

On their part the matter called for their finest playing, if they expected to make a capture of their enemy and do away with him.

This was their avowed intention, but whether they meant to kill him, or merely imprison him as they had imprisoned Detective McKays, remained to be seen.

"What be we goin' to do about it?" questioned Daylow.

"Hang me if I know just what to do," answered the Ferret.

"We want to get hold of the fuller and put him where he can't do harm."

"That is the idea, but just how to do it is the sticker. So you think he isn't the one you had the flight with?"

"Why, I'm sure he isn't, for don't you see, he can't be. That feller went out of the house like he was sent for, and we after him to the door. He had side whiskers and a cap with double fronts."

"But he was no doubt in disguise then."

"What are ye giving me? Could he change as quick as that? Not much he couldn't. Besides, where could he had his high hat? And how did he get back into the house again?"

These were points that even Ferret Joe could not answer.

"It must be that there were two of them then," he decided. "This is the one I was after once before, anyhow. Well, the thing for us to do is to see that he don't get a chance to blow out what he's discovered."

Just then Dick went off down the street, and they followed.

"How would it do to go and call Hepper to help us?" suggested Daylow.

"The trouble is, I don't want any help," objected the Ferret. "This man threw me off once, and I want the satisfaction of nabbing him. We are enough for him, so come on."

And on they went.

Dick was in a thoughtful mood.

He hardly knew just what move to make next.

Turning his back upon this house was something he hated to do.

Still, he did not see what else he could do, just then. And yet he might watch the house until Kodak Kate appeared.

This thought seemed to promise something, and he turned abruptly around and started back the way he had come.

As he turned he caught sight of Ferret Joe and his companion, quick as they were to dodge.

Seeing Dick turn, Ferret Joe had caught Daylow by the arm and jerked him aside.

They had been keeping close to the buildings, and now they entered a doorway that was handily ajar for them.

"Did he see us?" asked Webb.

"Can't tell," answered Joe. "He had to be quick if he did."

Dick was at the corner of a street at the moment of his turning, and went in a new direction.

And no sooner had he turned the corner than he took off his high hat and beard and appeared in proper person.

"Here we are again," he exclaimed to himself. "I'm darned if this isn't as hot a game as I ever played. That fellow seems to turn up at any time. This is the second lesson I've had, now."

When the disguise had been removed, and he had gone a little distance, Dick turned and retraced his steps.

"I'll take the chances of his knowing me," he decided. "He only saw me once this way, and that was in the dusky lobby of that hotel, and I don't believe he would remember my face. Anyhow here goes for it."

So having turned he kept on to the street from which he had just come.

In the mean time Ferret Joe had peered out to see if their man was coming, and discovered that he was gone.

"Hang me if he hasn't disappeared!" he ejaculated.

"It can't be!" cried his partner.

"But it is so," urged the Ferret, and out he ran.

"Must have turned into that street," suggested Webb.

"We'll soon know, anyhow," declared the Ferret, and to the corner he ran, the other fellow right at his heels.

When they reached the corner they came face to face with Deadwood Dick, and there was almost a collision.

"Whoap!" cried Dick. "Hold your team a little, my man; my life isn't insured against accidents."

"Beg pardon," the Ferret responded.

They dodged around, and looked up and down the street in both directions.

Their man was nowhere in sight. It was another case of a throwing overboard, as Ferret Joe had called it.

While they looked, Dick had passed on, and was going in the direction of the house into which Alban Wyntonpe and the woman had gone.

Arriving opposite, he turned his head to glance back at his enemies, and saw that they were not giving him any attention whatever, but were still arguing about his wonderful disappearance.

Noting this, Dick looked across to the house on the opposite side of the way, and as he looked he saw the door open and the veiled woman come out.

"Just in time for the ball again," the detective muttered. "I'll take a little interest in her and learn where she goes to, and who she is if I can."

Another look after Ferret Joe and his evil comrade.

They had gone out of sight.

The woman turned up the street, and Dick, on his side of the way, went right along as though

he had no interest in the world in anything but himself.

But he had. His interest was now centered upon the woman, and he noted two things. One was, that she was not an old woman by any means: her carriage told that. And the other was the fact that she was cautious in her movements.

Now and again she glanced back, as if to see if any one was watching her.

Gradually she became more confident, however, and went along at a pace that was by no means slow.

Dick tried to do some guessing as to who she could be, but of course could not hit upon the truth. He was barely beginning the case yet.

She kept up the same pace, minute after minute, until finally a good deal of distance had been covered.

Finally she stopped at a house that, to all appearances, was unoccupied, and went in.

Dick noted that she let herself in with a key, and conjectured that no one was there. What was the meaning of this?

For a little time he watched the house, waiting for her to reappear, if she was going to, but she did not again come out.

While he waited, though, another person came along, ran lightly up the steps, and tugged at the bell.

This person was a postman, and his appearance Dick bailed with delight.

The door opened after a moment's delay, and a letter the postman had in hand was delivered.

He immediately passed on his way, and Dick crossed to the opposite corner to intercept him, to learn what he could.

The postman soon came along, and Dick stopped him.

"Will you please tell me who lives there at sixty-six?" he asked.

"How should I know?" was the response.

"You just delivered a letter there."

"Well, I can't tell you about the letters I handle."

The fellow was a self-important chap, and was not disposed to give any information he did not have to.

Deadwood Dick displayed a badge he had under his coat.

"I suppose you know what this is," he observed.

This had the desired effect.

"Well, yes, I think so," was the answer.

"You see, then, I am interested in that house."

"Why didn't you show me who you was in the first place? I couldn't know you was one of the boys."

"Well, no matter, you know it now. But, don't let's waste time and words. I would like to know who that letter was addressed to, that's all."

"It was addressed to Madam Gounot. That's all I know about her, that I can think of."

"Good enough, and much obliged. Of course you won't tell her that an officer asked you any questions?"

"Do you take me for a cheese?" the postman asked. "I should say I wouldn't. I'm up to the times, partner, you bet."

With that, and a knowing wink, the postman went on, and Dick fell to thinking about the case. The further he got along in it the further he seemed from the right solution of the mystery. Who was this Madam Gounot.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD.

DICK stood on the corner for a moment thinking.

He wondered what would be the next phase of the terrible tangle.

It was working into his hands, slowly but surely, and he felt that he would soon have his grip upon it.

While he stood there, too, a thought came to him. Was not this the house in which the judge's wife was imprisoned? It was quite likely.

He looked back in the direction of the house. As he did so the veiled woman was just coming down the steps.

"Well," he mused, "she made a short stay of it, anyhow."

She came on toward the corner where he stood, retracing her steps in the direction from which she had come.

Dick stood still to allow her to pass him, hoping to get a better look at her at this close range though he had no hope of seeing her face.

Just the moment she was passing him however, a sudden gust of wind swept up the crossing street, taking off Dick's hat and sending it

spinning away, and baring the woman's face for a second completely.

Dick paid no attention to his hat for that second, but grasped the fortunate opportunity to look at the face.

The woman was not over thirty, a day, and was perhaps younger. She was handsome, too, but her beauty was of that cold, steely type, that is chilling to look upon. Her look was suggestive of a snake.

She caught at her veil instantly, pulled it down in place, and went on, not even looking at Deadwood Dick.

"Well, that's worth the loss of a hat, anyhow," Dick mused, as he looked around for his top covering. "She's a beauty, but she looks too icy and cruel to suit my fancy. She's one of the gang, and that I'm betting on."

A boy had caught Dick's hat and now brought it to him, and tossing the lad a quarter for his trouble Dick sauntered back in the direction of the mysterious house.

Coming to it, he stopped and looked at it critically.

"It is a closed mansion," he declared. "It is used as a blind for some purpose or other. Hal Wonder if it isn't where the judge's letters come to? The letters he sends to that Martin Garble."

Here was a thought that was worth some investigation.

Dick ascended the steps and rung the bell.

If there was anybody there he meant to know it. It would be easy to invent some excuse for ringing.

The bell clanged with an empty sound, the echoes died away, half a minute passed and the door was not opened.

Dick gave two or three rings in succession; hasty, impatient ones, as though his business was of importance and would admit of no delay.

Still there was no answer.

The house was empty.

"That settles that point, I think," Dick decided.

His next determination was to enter the house, if he could get in.

He tried the door, but it was fast enough. No hope of getting in that way he knew.

Going down the steps, he passed around under the stoop and entered the area, trying the door there.

This, too, was fast, but Dick was now determined, and would not be balked. A heavy stick lay on the floor of the area, and taking it up he pried off the grating of the door and broke a glass.

He knew this was taking a desperate step, but thought the circumstances would almost justify it, and anyhow he was willing to stand by the consequences of the act, if it would bring him anything new in regard to the case in hand.

The way made, it was easy to reach in and draw the bolt and turn the key that was in the lock, and the entrance to the house was gained. The door swung open and the detective went in, closing it after him. And it was by that time positively certain that the house was unoccupied.

Dick looked around in the lower rooms, but found nothing, unless it was dirt, the mark of the last tenants.

Going up to the next floor, he looked still further and still more carefully. He thought it possible that he should find a furnished room.

But nothing of the sort was there. The house was entirely void of furniture, and there was no indication that any one had spent any time there within a period of weeks, and perhaps months.

"That's the secret of it," Dick decided. "This is a place to receive letters at, and it's used for no other purpose."

Stepping to the front door, he looked carefully around the floor.

There he found some small scraps, showing where envelopes had been opened and the fragments dropped.

"And here is the proof of it," he mused.

He put the scraps in his pocket, and passed down to the floor below.

Here he repaired the door as well as he could, and went out, locking it as he had opened it.

"And now for the hotel," he decided, as he went away from the place. "It is time I heard from Kodak Kate, and I'll go there and see if there isn't some word from her."

So he set out for the hotel where he had last registered.

In due time he was there, and going into the office, inquired for letters.

There were two.

One was from Kodak Kate and the other was from Judge Wynthorpe.

Dick opened the latter first, wondering what the judge had to say to him so soon.

It was a brief note, telling Dick that the answer had been received from the band of rascals, saying that the offer was not accepted, and that nothing short of the demand made would be accepted. Further than that, threats were made that unless he came to their terms soon, the life of his wife would be endangered. The judge wanted Dick to assure him again that there would be hope if he delayed.

"I pity the judge, and that's the fact," Dick mused, after reading the missive through. "What will he say when he learns his son is playing him false? It is too bad, and I almost wish I were well out of the case. But business is business, and it is my business to bring the truth to light, no matter what the result is. That should be nothing to me. But still I hate to be the one to break this piece of disgraceful news to the father. I shall have to see him again, I suppose, to remind him of his promises to me."

He had opened the other letter while reflecting thus, and now read that one.

It informed him that Kodak Kate had received his note of warning, and that she would take care that her shadower did not profit anything by his pains.

By this time Dick felt decidedly like taking something to eat.

He had been on the move constantly for several hours, and was beginning to feel the effects of it.

Besides, he how wanted time to give the case some calm reflection, so made up his mind to lay off for a couple of hours and recuperate.

It was now the middle of the afternoon.

He made way with a hearty meal, and then settled in the office for a smoke and some quiet thinking.

In the course of the next hour he had outlined his plans, as nearly as it could be done, not knowing what complications might arise later on.

While he was there a postman came in with a letter, and when the clerk had received it he stepped out from his place and brought it to Dick. It was another from Kodak Kate.

It informed Dick that his second letter had been received, and that she would undertake at once the work required of her.

Further, it explained that she would go disguised as an old woman, walking with a cane.

Dick had wanted to hear from his ally again before starting out anew.

Now he soon left the hotel, aiming for the house she was to watch with a view to catching photographs of its inmates.

When he arrived in the neighborhood he began to use caution, not wanting to be seen and recognized by any of the band if he could avoid it.

It will be remembered that Dick's two disguises were now more familiar to the rascals than was his own proper appearance. That being the case, he was now without disguise.

When he came in view of the house he saw an old woman near it, begging.

She was bent and feeble, to all appearances, and had a cane in her hand to aid her tottering steps.

Dick walked leisurely along, and as he approached where she stood she held out her hand to him.

The detective looked at her, and at first he could not believe it was his ally.

She had on a white wig, a white cap over that, and over that a hood. Big blue glasses hid her eyes, and her face, none too clean, looked aged and wrinkled. It did not seem possible it could be Kodak Kate.

"Help a poor old woman, sir?" she whined, hobbling closer to him.

Dick's hand went into his pocket for some change.

"Are you Kodak Kate?" he asked in an undertone.

"Sure," was the whispered answer.

"Well, no one will ever suspect you," Dick declared. "You are made up the best I ever saw."

"Thanks for the compliment. I'm on duty, as you required of me."

"I got your answer to my letter. You must get a snap shot at that woman, at any cost."

"And at any cost I'll do it," Kodak Kate promised.

Dick now put some change in her hand.

"Thank 'e, sir, thank 'e," she whined. "May blessin's rest on ye, sir."

Dick went on, and Kate turned her attention to others who were passing up and down.

Leaving her to take care of that part of their present work, Dick himself set out in the direction of Judge Wynton's residence.

He believed it would be necessary to see the judge again, to impress upon him more forcibly the necessity of his holding out. From his last letter, he knew the judge was yielding again to his anxiety and fear.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK IS STAGGERED AGAIN.

ON his way Dick put on a partial disguise.

This it was easy enough to do. He had merely to step out of sight for a moment.

He put on the high hat and a pair of glasses, and buttoning his coat up to the chin, he might have passed anywhere for a clergyman.

Going boldly to the judge's residence, he rung the bell.

A servant responded to the ring.

"Is Judge Wynton at home?" Dick asked.

"Yes, sir, he is," was the answer.

"I would like to see him."

"What name, sir?"

"Rev. Ward Howell, tell him."

Dick was admitted into a reception-room, and the servant went to announce his presence.

In a little while the judge came.

He looked at Dick as if uncertain how to greet him.

"It is I, sir," spoke Dick, smiling.

The judge was reassured.

"So I thought," he said, "but your appearance deceived me."

"Say no more," continued Dick, in a lower tone. "Are we where we cannot possibly be overheard?"

"We cannot be overheard if we speak as we are speaking now. There is no danger that any one will overhear."

"Very well; your word for it. I received your letter, sir, and I thought it necessary to come to you at once. I had fears that you would do something to balk the progress I have made."

"You see they threaten the life of my wife, sir."

"Have no fear on that score. They dare not harm her, sir."

"Can you be sure of that? Remember, it is everything to me; I am ready to make any sacrifice now."

"Don't yield a single point," urged Dick. "I have got the rascals under my eye, and can scoop them in at any time, with police help."

"What, so soon?"

"Exactly."

"Then why do you delay about it?"

"Because I want to get the proof against them so strong that there will not be a ghost of a chance for them to squirm out of the net."

"I see. And you are telling me true? Not boasting vainly, to take credit to yourself for what is not really the case? But I cannot think you would do that, sir."

Deadwood Dick was half angered, but kept cool.

"I am ready to prove whatever good your friend, Governor Woodlow, may have said of me," he returned. "My reputation was not made in a day, and it is not likely that I would tear it down in a moment."

"Pardon me, pardon me! But you must allow for the state of mind I am in. It is a wonder that I have any reason left."

"I am ready to overlook it all," spoke Dick.

"I must tell you, though, judge, that there are likely to be some painful disclosures for you when this case is cleared up."

"What do you mean?" the judge asked.

"Exactly what I say. And that is all I am prepared to say now."

"Can you tell me what these disclosures are likely to be? Of what nature?"

"Not at present. I merely mention it so that you may be in a measure prepared for them. And, by the way, speak of it to no one."

Their further talk in that line need not be quoted. Dick urged upon the judge the importance of silence, and made him promise again that he would hold out against the rascals the required time.

In the mean time something else was going on.

When Dick had been admitted into the house a pair of watching eyes were upon him.

Not that he had been followed, or had been seen from without, but this person who took interest in him was in the house.

On the other side of the hall from the reception-room was a small room which the

judge used for his private office. In that room was Ethan Maybrooke, the secretary.

When the bell rung he sprang to the office door to see who would enter.

Opening the door just a little he saw and heard all.

When Dick had entered the reception-room the secretary put on his hat, and as soon as the judge had joined Dick there, the young rascal went out of the house and hurried away.

He was not gone many minutes, but plenty long enough to accomplish the purpose that had taken him out.

And that had been, to send word to the others that an enemy was in the camp.

Not that he could be positive that such was the case, but this was a game of such fine playing, that no chances could be taken.

Within twenty minutes a shadower was watching the house, waiting for Dick to come out. And that shadower was no other than Ferret Joe, now in disguise, with Webb Daylow to help him.

Dick's call lasted something more than half an hour.

This time he had a thorough talk with the judge, clinched his strong points, and felt that now he could trust the judge to hold out.

He had risen to go, and was exchanging some parting words, when a photograph on the table caught his eye and caused him to start. It was one he had not noticed before.

"Whose likeness is this?" he carelessly asked.

"Ha! that is my dear wife," the judge responded, catching it up and handing it to Dick.

Dick could hardly repress an exclamation.

It was the face of the veiled woman he had shadowed to the vacant house.

"I am glad that I have been able to see it,"

Dick remarked, as he handed it back again. "If I should see her I shall be able to recognize her."

"And I hope that such good fortune may soon come," the judge impressively remarked.

Dick took his leave.

His mind was in a whirl now.

The case was more than he could grasp, with the present light he had upon it.

What possible explanation would be forthcoming? What part was this woman playing in the game?

"It is hard to believe that the woman I saw is the judge's wife," he mused. "But there is the photograph in proof of it. Can it be that there are two women looking so nearly alike?"

This was a point that made the puzzle none the less mystifying. He knew by experience that strong personal resemblance, though not common, was by no means rare. He had had an experience or two in that very line himself. But in this instance it must be a case extraordinary.

Still, as he had to acknowledge, he had had but a momentary view of the veiled woman's face. He might be mistaken, though that was hard to believe.

His eye was a quick one, and it was seldom that it played him tricks. There was more back of all this, that he felt sure of.

As has been stated, he now had plans laid for further work.

It was his intention, after night, to enter the house where Alban Wynton and the woman were known to be.

He knew it would be a dangerous mission to undertake, but he was used to danger, and knew that if nothing was risked nothing would be gained.

He was going in the direction of that house now, to learn how his ally was making out, or if anything new had taken place. It was not unlikely, he thought, that the rascals might desert the place.

And as he went along he was followed by the two fellows who were on his track with evil intent.

This time Ferret Joe was grimly determined that the man, for he was now convinced that Dick was the same one who had so cleverly escaped him before, should not throw him off.

But Dick had had experience enough to make him more than cautious too, and he knew that he must do nothing that would in any wise compromise his ally, were he being watched, or were Kate herself being under surveillance.

When he came near the house he saw the old woman still near by.

He passed right on, his hands clasped behind his back and his head bent down.

Any one might naturally think he was doing the deepest kind of thinking, and that was the impression he desired to make.

He still wore the clerical appearance, and it

might have been surmised that he was brooding over the sins of his fellow-men, and trying to hatch some great scheme for their emancipation.

Kodak Kate had her eye upon him as he approached.

Dick noted this, and was ready to have her address him as before.

When he came along she put out her hand to him, asking him for something to stave off the wolf.

"Anything new?" asked Dick, as he felt in his pocket.

"Thin, dark man been here, with another fellow," Kate explained. "I boxed them securely enough. Another man came in haste short time ago. Bagged him too. Then he and other two went off in haste."

"Sent for, eh?" observed Dick. "A sign they were wanted. No time to talk now. I'm going into that house to-night."

"And so am I, if I can," declared Kodak Kate, accepting the change he offered her. "There's more work for me in there than out here on the street."

"I believe you, but be careful," answered Dick.

"Trust me for being careful."

Dick went on.

His shadowers were watching all this.

"What d'ye think of that?" asked Webb Daylow.

"I don't know whether it's a blind or not," answered Ferret Joe.

They proceeded, now, Dick having gone on, and were soon at the point where Kodak Kate stood.

It will be remembered they were in disguise now. And their disguises were by no means lacking in merit.

Kodak Kate stopped them, made her pitiful plea, and they, desiring to answer the question they had raised stopped a moment. The Ferret gave her a few cents, and they passed on.

CHAPTER XII.

DETECTIVE DICK'S GRAND SCOOP.

KODAK KATE had scored a big inning.

She had played her part to perfection, and cheated the pair.

They went on, satisfied that she was what she seemed, and perfectly at ease on that point.

But if they were at ease it was not so with the woman who had tricked them. She had penetrated their disguise, and was concerned for Dick.

"They are following him," she said to herself, "and it is possible they will do him mischief, for I do not believe he is aware they are upon his track. What shall I do?"

She was at loss what to do.

On one hand was her duty at this post where Dick had placed her.

But on the other was this new emergency, and the danger that possibly threatened Dick.

She had to come to a decision without much delay, and it was without much delay that she did arrive at it, and set herself to act upon it.

Her duty was to warn Dick that he was being followed. That she must do, at any cost. With him trapped, and perhaps killed, what good would it do her to play shadow over the house?

She hobbled off down the street in the direction the men had taken.

The men and Dick were still in sight, and not far away.

Presently Kodak Kate stepped into a doorway.

A moment later came forth a Sister of Charity, in black hood and shawl, and passed down the street at a brisk walk.

It was still Kodak Kate, and the change in her appearance was nothing short of marvelous. But it had been extremely simple in the acquirement.

Dropping her cane, she had merely to turn her hood and shawl, and she was another person in an instant.

That done, off came the spectacles, her face was quickly wiped with a wet handkerchief, and with her kodak under her arm she was off and away as described.

Walking faster than the others, she was not long in passing Ferret Joe and his partner, and was soon nearly up to Deadwood Dick.

As soon as she came abreast with him, she whispered loudly, but without turning her head:

"I am Kate! You are followed! The thin man and another, in disguise!"

That was all, but it was quite enough. It

answered the purpose, and put Dick on his guard.

At her first word he had turned his head, but catching the idea instantly, pretended to give her no further attention, though he heard all.

"All right," he responded. "Thanks for the pointer! I'm not a bit surprised at it. Look out for yourself."

Kodak Kate went right along, turned the next corner and disappeared.

"She's a jewel!" Deadwood Dick exclaimed in thought. "Never took up a helper who pleased me half so well. Hang me if she isn't as good as a second self."

Going another block he turned a corner, and in turning glanced back up the street he had just come.

• Sure enough, there were the shadows.

Dick reflected upon what course to pursue.

He had come to look upon Ferret Joe as his worst enemy in the lot.

It was a fight of skill to the very teeth between them, and sooner or later one or the other of them would get downed.

As Dick had no desire to experience that for himself, he made up his mind that he had better try to bring about the downfall of his enemy, and dispose of him.

He ran the idea over in mind, and presently hit upon a plan.

It was a bold one, and one that was full of danger to himself, but he decided to act upon it.

Changing his course, he headed for the house where he had had the fight with the three men some hours before.

It was his intention to go there and go in, and if Ferret Joe was the man he took him to be, he would follow, seeing it would be two against one.

If they did that, Dick felt confidence enough in himself to believe that he could make a capture of them, unless some unseen obstacle popped up in the way to favor them.

His determination made, Dick went straight to the house.

Arriving there, he went in without looking around, knowing well enough that he was seen, and not wanting to arouse suspicion.

But here a surprise awaited him that was not down on the programme he had made up. He was running into danger greater than he had any thought of meeting.

Entering boldly, he sprung lightly and rapidly up-stairs.

He still had the appearance of a preacher, having made no change in his make-up.

Reaching the second floor, he opened the door of the room in which the fight had taken place, and stepped hurriedly in.

What was his amazement to find two men there, and both with revolvers aimed at his head the moment the door opened. It was a surprise with a vengeance for him.

"Hands up, parson!"

That was the stern order.

Dick took in the situation in an instant.

"W—w—what means this?" he gasped, as if frightened half to death. He believed these were two of the band who had come to the house without knowing it had been deserted.

And his guess was correct. They had come in only a few minutes ahead of him, and seeing the evidences of the fight, were wondering what had been going on.

His steps on the stairs filled them with alarm. They believed the police were upon them, and so when the door opened they were ready for whatever might be the order of the moment.

"What are you doin' here," one of the men roughly demanded.

Dick knew that whatever was done had to be done in all haste.

If the other two men got in upon him before he could dispose of these, or at any rate escape, he might have more than he had bargained for.

"It—it seems I have got into the wrong house," he gasped, his tone trembling as though with fear. "Is there a dying man here?"

"No, there isn't," was the answer, "but there's no tellin' how soon there will be one, parson, if you don't slope instanter. You are not wanted here."

"I must have got into the wrong house," Dick mused as if in explanation.

"Yes, we reckon ye have," he was assured.

"And the sooner you make tracks for the right one, the better too."

"With your leave then, gentlemen, I'll retire at once and in all haste," he remarked as he made the move to withdraw.

"Yes, go!" he was ordered, "and don't show your nose here again."

His clever playing had fooled them complete-

ly, and with the words they lowered their weapons.

In the wink of an eye Deadwood Dick whipped out his own peerless poppers, and had the drop on them in the very neatest kind of way.

"Hands up, you!" he cried, "or I'll drill you before you can wink your eye!"

The rascals paled, and fell back in consternation.

"Trapped!" they both gasped.

At that instant the door below opened, and running steps were heard.

"You bet you are!" cried Dick. "Drop your weapons, both of you, and stand back."

The order was obeyed promptly, the weapons were allowed to drop upon the lounge near which the fellows were standing, and they stepped back.

The steps were coming nearer each second, and Dick knew what they meant to him.

With a bound forward, a pair of handcuffs in hand, he threw himself upon the cowed villains and linked their hands together, left to right.

The next half-second and the door opened.

In sprung Ferret Joe and his partner, their revolvers drawn.

"Drop them!" cried Deadwood Dick, "or you die in your tracks!"

"Never!" the Ferret cried in answer, and he raised his arm. But it were better for him that he had not done so.

One of Dick's weapons spoke and the bullet struck the Ferret's hand, tearing the revolver out of it and causing him to howl with pain.

"Hands up!" Dick ordered grimly, "or get another dose and a worse one."

The fellows' hands went up.

The four looked at one another, foolishly.

Ferret Joe was howling, groaning and swearing, all at once.

Very fortunately for him the bullet had broken no bones in his hand, but had lacerated the flesh of the inside terribly.

"What do you think about it now, my fine fellow?" Dick asked, smiling.

"Are you the devil?" questioned the Ferret.

"Not a bit of it," Dick assured.

"Well, I'd like to know who you are, then."

"And I don't mind telling you now. I'm Deadwood Dick. Ever hear of me?"

It was quite evident from the excited words and looks of the men, that they were no strangers to this name that had become famous in criminal circles, as it had become exalted in police and detective annals.

"It is all up with us," groaned the Ferret, sinking down upon a chair, nursing his injured hand.

"It wouldn't be, if we had only knowed you was comin'," complained one of the first captured pair.

"Why, how is that?" Webb Daylow asked.

"Cause we hadn't had these things on when you kem in."

"The dickens you hadn't!"

"No more we had. If we'd knowed it was you, we'd ha' resked fight, and you bet somebody would ha' took a fall."

"I can assure you on that point, if you doubt it," laughed Deadwood Dick.

"An' that somebody would ha' been you," the man added.

"Not much! Deadwood Dick is not falling just yet. But, here you are, and now what am I going to do with you?"

The first thing he did was to secure all four of the men so that their escape was next to impossible, and then he went down to the street to see about sending for help. He had an idea in mind which he wanted to carry out.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK ENTERS THE JUNGLE.

DEADWOOD DICK had made a big haul, and knew it.

He had made one of his clever and extremely "nervy" plays.

And now the way was opening for another, with so many less against him.

The case had now progressed so far that Ferret Joe and these others could well be spared out of it, from Dick's point of view.

And their sudden capture would weaken the band just so much, and would give him more freedom to work.

But he must guard against their capture becoming known to the others.

It was that which he was about to take care of now.

He soon found a boy whom he thought he could trust, and, writing a note, sent him to deliver it at the office of a detective.

The messenger having gone, Dick returned to the room where his prisoners were confined.

No sooner had he entered than Ferret Joe had a proposition for him.

"We have made up our minds to something," he broached.

"Well, and what is it now?" Dick invited.

"We want to sell out to you."

"What have you got to sell?" inquired Dick.

"What we know."

"What's that?"

"That is the point. Will you let us escape and get out of the city if we will give the rest away?"

"Well, not hardly," the detective assured.

"But it will put the whole thing right in your hands," persisted Joe.

And the others lent their voices to urge the point upon their captor. What they wanted was liberty, at any cost.

Dick had no idea but they were sincere enough in their offer, but he had no need now of their information. That is, he could get on without it.

It was quite probable that in a few hours he would know as much as they about the matter, and perhaps a good deal more. He had to decline their offer with thanks, and still hold fast to them.

"I can't do it," he informed them. "You can't tell me anything that I don't know already, or that I won't find out pretty soon anyhow."

"What do you know?" inquired Ferret Joe.

"Well, for one thing, I know that Judge Wynton's son is in this."

Dick meant to sound the men a little, even though he got nothing out of them by so doing.

"And what else do you know?" the Ferret pursued, adding: "Not saying that is true, just the same."

"Well, further, I know the judge's wife is in it!"

This was a startler, one way or the other.

Dick could not decide how it hit.

"Of course she's in it," put in the Ferret.

"She's in it so bad she can't get out."

Dick smiled.

"I know something about that," he declared.

The expression on the men's faces could be taken two ways.

They might know all, and were wondering how Dick had come by the knowledge; or his assertion might be a surprise to them.

But whichever way it was, their offer to expose what they knew was not accepted, and they knew the fate that awaited them.

An hour or longer dragged by, during which time Dick learned little or nothing new from his prisoners, for they were cautious; and at the end of that time two men entered the house and came up to the room.

These were detectives, and at the sight of Dick, sitting there over his four prisoners, they looked amazed.

"Did you take all these fellows?" they asked.

"As you see," assured Dick.

"But not alone, did you?"

"So it happened," carelessly.

One of the detectives sprung forward and grasped Dick's hand.

"You deserve the name you have won," he cried. "Nobody but Deadwood Dick could have done it."

"Oh, yes; any one could," Dick passed it off.

"But I have sent for you to see if you would lend me a hand. What do you say?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"You see," Dick explained, "I do not want this arrest to become known, and at the same time don't want the fellows to have a chance to escape."

"Consequently you want some one to stay right here and guard them, to see that they keep safe till they are wanted."

"That is it exactly. It may be a watch all night though, and maybe you don't want it."

"But we'll do it, you bet."

And so it was fixed.

The detective, a friend of Dick's, took the task upon himself, with the help of his comrade, and together they would hold the fort and the prisoners.

Dick went forth from the house without a disguise, and went back to the one that he had left Kodak Kate to watch.

He found her still there, as the old woman, which character she had reassumed after warning him.

He paid no attention to her begging this time, but passed right on.

As he passed her, however, he told her to follow him.

He went on and turned the corner, and waited.

In a little while she hobbled around.

Dick greeted her warmly.

"Kodak Kate," he cried, taking her hand, "you are a brick!"

"Hadn't you better be cautious?" the little lady asked. "We may be watched, you know."

"There are just four chances less that we are not watched, than there were a couple of hours ago," Dick assured.

"Why, how is that?" was eagerly asked.

"Because I have captured four of the fellows," Dick answered.

He had to go ahead and tell her all about it, and Kate complimented him highly.

"But much of it, I may say all of it, was due to you," urged Dick. "The clever way in which you warned me that I was being followed, was what brought it about. You see the honor is yours."

"No, I don't see it at all. But what is the next move?"

"It is coming near night now."

"I see it is."

"And we have decided to enter that house."

"I am not going to back out, either. I want some more pictures."

"You shall have them, too. Have you bagged any since I saw you last?"

"Only two. One of a young man who came to the house, and another of the same person when he went away, with another man standing at the door."

"That is good enough. Now I am going to propose a plan to you. You know it will be impossible for us to gain admission openly and accomplish anything. We must get in by some secret way."

"I can see that you are right there."

"And the way I purpose doing it is to go up to the top of the house and come down through the roof."

This proposal seemed a little more than the lady had looked for.

"I don't know whether I am equal to that or not," she faltered.

"It is quite likely that you wouldn't be," laughed Dick.

"Then how else will I get in?"

"I shall open the front door and let you in that way?"

"But that is risky. We may get caught at it."

"We must take the chances of that."

"Very well, I agree to it."

And so that plan was arranged, and talked over in detail, as far as possible, at that time.

Dick took it upon himself to watch the house for a time, while Kodak Kate went home to assume another disguise and refresh herself.

When she returned it was night, or could be called so, for it was fast growing dark. Dick then turned the post over to her again, while he went to prepare for the campaign.

It was all understood what Kate was to do in case the persons in the house sought other quarters.

By the time Dick got back again the evening was advancing.

He had been to see that the prisoners were safe.

And safe enough they were, then.

His first move was to try the doors of the house, both hall and area.

He found them both secured, as he had expected, and saw that entrance was not to be gained that way.

It was likely that his other idea would have to be carried out in full, so he immediately cast about for the means of gaining the roof.

On the corner of the block was a store.

Going there, he showed his authority and asked permission to get to the roof.

It was granted, after some parley, and that much toward the end in view was gained to him.

Once upon the roof, Dick felt that half the battle had been won.

The only thing in the way would be the chance of finding no scuttle to the house; or finding it, that it could not be opened.

Keeping close to the front, where he could see Kodak Kate on the opposite side of the street, Dick passed rapidly along until he came to the right house.

Here he disappeared from view of his ally, and she could do nothing then but await the result of his bold undertaking.

Dick found the scuttle all right, but it was fastened down, as he had feared it would be.

But he was not balked yet. It was of glass, and he set about taking out one of the panes, which it was not difficult to do.

In due time his labor was rewarded.

The glass was out, and he was master of the situation so far.

It was no work then to reach in and draw the bolts, and the door was lifted open.

Dick saw light below, and listened. No one seemed to be near, and he swung his legs over, let himself down upon the ladder, and after closing the door, went down to the floor. Now, whatever was to come of it, he was in the tiger's den, and knew that he was in a dangerous place.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK'S WORK UNDONE.

IN the meantime something else was going on. About the time when Dick got into the house, Ferret Joe had free hands.

This Ferret Joe, by the way, was something of a remarkable character in his disreputable way. He had been a detective at one time, but had found it hard to resist taking offered bribes, when the sums were sizable.

In this way he had fallen from grace, had drifted to San Francisco, had gone from bad to worse, and now was lending his talent on the side of evil and crime.

He had often made it his boast that no pair of handcuffs could hold him.

And in this he was about right, unless they were wonderfully close-fitting.

He was one of those men whose wrists are about as large as the hand, when the hand is stretched out and drawn close.

Only for the manner in which Deadwood Dick had bound him, with the others, besides handcuffing them, he might have been loose long before.

As it was, Webb Daylow had spent a good deal of time in untying their mutual bonds, he having the use of one hand, while Joe was disabled in one hand, as will be remembered.

And about that time came a man to the house to call away one of the detectives whom Dick had left there.

At first the man refused to go, but it seemed the need was pressing, so he had to comply. And it looked as though one man ought to be enough to guard the prisoners.

The men were securely bound, and the only danger, apparently, was from the arrival of others of the band at the den.

Anyhow the detective had to go, and his companion was left in charge, with the most positive orders not to leave the room for a minute, and at all hazards not to sleep.

And this, as said, was about the time that Deadwood Dick ventured into the rascals' headquarters.

He little imagined that he would have the whole swarm around him before the game ended.

Ferret Joe took plenty of time.

His wound was painful, and he made more than a little ado over that.

A good deal of it was put on, to cover any movements he might make, and any otherwise suspicious contortions.

After a time he got keys from his pocket, with all the slyness his long training had given him, and later on the handcuff was taken from Webb's wrist.

Here were two of them free, and right under the eyes of the detective who was supposed to guard them.

But the man was hardly to blame. He was not a veteran by any means, and besides he was contending against detective talent and skill.

Another hour passed by, and at the end of that time another of the band was free, and the time for action had arrived.

Before the guardsman had a suspicion that anything was wrong, Webb Daylow and another sprung upon him.

In a moment he was disarmed, and the handcuffs were upon his wrists.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Ferret. "How do you like that?"

The detective was too amazed to utter a word.

Webb Daylow freed the rest of the men, and then attended to the wound Ferret Joe had received.

"That accursed Deadwood Dick shall pay for this, and with interest!" the Ferret hissed. "If he isn't a dead man in less than six hours, I'm a liar."

And it was clear that he meant what he said.

Finally they were ready to leave the house, and dragging the detective into the dark room, they left him there, and locked the door when they went away.

They immediately bent their steps in the

direction of the headquarters, with news for their ringleader, the news that it was the great Deadwood Dick who was after them.

And they were destined to arrive there at a critical moment.

How was the battle to terminate?

But let us return to Dick.

When he was down the steps he paused to listen.

No one was stirring on that floor, and he proceeded to find his way down to the floors below.

He had made sure that his trusty weapons were ready at his command, the one important thing for a man who ran the risks he did.

Dick was not long in finding the stairs that led down, and the next floor, he discovered, was lighted up.

Here was danger, but it was what he had expected.

Before he descended all the way, he made sure that no one was in the hall, and that all the doors were closed.

Assured upon these points, he passed on, and prepared to risk the next floor, as of course he had to if he expected to learn anything.

Passing along the hall, with no more noise than a cat might have made, he set foot upon the next stairs, and was about half-way down when the door-bell rung.

This meant danger for our Richard.

With weapon in hand, he retraced his steps.

A couple or three bounds and he was again at the top.

He expected discovery now, and eyed the doors of the rooms on that landing.

None of them opened, however, and in a moment more he heard some one on the floor below going to answer the bell.

Looking over and down, Dick discovered that the person was a big colored woman, and he mentally calculated that it would be about as bad to tackle her as a man.

But that thought gave him no concern then. He was interested to learn who was coming.

The woman opened the door and a young man came in.

It was Ethan Maybrooke, the judge's secretary.

Dick did not know him as we are aware.

The young man seemed quite at home, and with only a word to the colored woman he entered a room on the right of the hall.

The woman closed and secured the door and retired whence she had come, and the coast was again clear for Dick to proceed further.

Now he made haste down the stairs, thinking it not likely that any one would appear in the hall immediately, and judging that if heard he would be taken for the colored servant.

Reaching the bottom, he advanced straight to the front door, opened it silently, and gave the signal to Kodak Kate.

She was right on hand, and running lightly up the steps, was admitted and the door was shut.

Dick knew it was taking a big risk to admit her so soon, before he had surveyed the enemy's camp himself, but he knew that long chances often won.

The door being closed, he caught her hand and led her toward the rear of the hall, where they could pause for a moment to consult.

There was a turn there, behind which they were hid from the front of the hall, and from which stairs led down to the basement floor.

Opposite was a door that evidently opened into a room in the rear of the one the young man had entered.

"Well, what's to be done?" questioned Kodak Kate.

"We ought to know just how many servants are here," responded Dick.

"Shall I go down and investigate?"

"Not alone. We'll go together. There's one big negress, in whose hands you would be as a child, judging by her size. She may be the only servant here, and if so we will capture her."

"I am ready to do whatever you direct, no matter what it is."

"Well, come on with me, then. But take these handcuffs, and when I grab the old lady you put them on her wrists. Can you do that?"

"Try me and see," was the response.

Dick liked an answer of that sort. It proved that Kate had confidence in her ability, anyhow.

They went down the stairs as silently as the shadows they were, and reached the bottom without having made any noise that would have drawn attention.

Toward the rear was a door partly open, and from it light streamed out into the hall.

The negress was heard humming a tune for

her own amusement, which served a double purpose in this instance.

Dick and Kate advanced toward the door, and Dick peered into the room.

It was the kitchen, and the negress stood with her back to the door doing some work at a table.

She was the only person there, and the situation could not have satisfied Dick more if he had ordered it so.

Turning back and whispering to Kate some directions, and seeing that she was in readiness to do her part, Dick passed into the room, and in the next moment had caught hold around the woman, clapping one hand over her mouth.

There was a struggle immediately, but it was of short duration, for Kodak Kate caught the arms of the negress as she was trying to tear Dick's hand away, and with a display of strength Dick had not thought possible, put the handcuffs upon her wrists.

Dick still held fast to the woman's mouth till he had directed Kate to put her revolver to head and kill her instantly if she made an outcry.

This Kate vowed she would do, and Dick let go and proceeded to gag the woman so effectively that she could not give any alarm if she wanted to do so. And this much done, her feet were tied together, and she was bound to a chair.

All this took but a few minutes to accomplish, and when it was done Dick made the doors secure, turned down the light, and he and his ally went out and up to the other floor.

"Now," said Dick, "we'll see if there isn't a chance for you to watch for some snap-shots with your little joker. You have it with you, of course."

"What would Kodak Kate be without it?" was the response. "It is secured by a strap here at my side, as you see."

"Good enough. We'll go into this back room here, and maybe there will be a good chance to hear what is going on in the next room, even if we can't see. And when you are stationed, then I'm going to search the house for Detective McKays."

"Whatever you direct, sir," Kate readily acquiesced.

Dick looked up the hall, saw that no one was in sight, and tried the door.

It opened to his touch, disclosing a room semi-dark, and voices in the other room were plainly heard.

Looking, Dick saw that folding-doors separated the two rooms, and that they were open about a foot. The front room was light, and two or three persons were within, talking.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FINAL STROKE.

DICK and Kodak Kate entered the room.

The door was left open, convenient for retreat.

They stepped to where they commanded a view into the other room.

Seated together in a big arm-chair were seen Alban Wynthorpe and the judge's missing wife.

Kodak Kate gave a start of greatest surprise.

"That woman is Mrs. Wynthorpe!" she exclaimed in a whisper.

"I know it," responded Dick. "And the man is the judge's worthy son."

"A pretty pair they are. I am going to bag a picture of them while they sit so lovingly together."

"I would not have you miss one for a thousand dollars," declared Dick. "Get it instantly. And as many more as you can."

Kodak Kate made sure of her aim, and the picture was hers.

Her instrument was so adjusted that it made but the very slightest sound when she pressed the button.

"Now," whispered Dick, "I must leave you here while I go and look for McKays. He is in this house, I am sure. Get every important picture you can, and attend to all that is said."

"Trust me to do my part, Deadwood Dick."

"I know I can do so. And should the bell ring, let it ring till some one in the room answers it."

With that, Dick silently withdrew from the room, leaving his ally in charge, and again descended to the floor below.

Entering the kitchen, he turned up the light and looked carefully around. He saw several doors, and proceeded to investigate.

The one in the rear, as he rightly guessed, opened outdoors. Others let him into closets, and one he found was securely locked. He

looked around for the key but could not find it. Stepping up to the big negress he demanded to know where the key was.

She would make no motion to indicate, but looked at Dick with eyes burning with hatred.

Dick imagined that about as likely a place as any would be in her pocket, if she had one, and proceeded to find out about that without delay.

He found a pocket, and sure enough a key was in it. Stepping to the door he tried it in the lock, and it proved to be the right one. The door opened into a basement cellar.

Striking a match, he looked around for a gas-jet, and having found and lighted it, took a survey of the place.

In the back part of the hole was a man, bound and gagged and looking altogether miserable.

Dick sprung to his side, took away the gag, and asked:

"Are you Detective McKays?"

"Yes, I am," was the answer. "Who are you?"

"I am Deadwood Dick," Dick replied, at the same time freeing the man.

McKays grasped his hand.

"I have heard of you," he declared. "Thank God you have found me."

"Are you used up?" asked Dick.

"Pretty nearly, but if there is anything I can do—"

"There is, if you feel able to help. I have some arrests to make here, and your help will come in handy."

"Count on me, as soon as I stretch my legs and arms a little."

Dick explained the situation while McKays was getting himself into shape, and presently the pair went silently up to the room above.

Kodak Kate was at her post, taking down in short-hand some highly-important conversation.

"Well, what is going to be done about it, then?" Alban Hepper was asking, as Dick and McKays entered.

"I hardly know," responded the woman, Mrs. Wynthorpe. "The game does not seem likely to work, and this detective is hot after us, you say?"

"Decidedly so. I begin to feel afraid of him. I expect the Ferret every minute, and hope he can report that he has made a capture of him. We are not safe a moment."

"Wouldn't it be well for the lost lamb to return to the fold?" the woman suggested, with a laugh.

"How could you do that?" was asked. "You would have to explain where you had been."

"And I could invent some lie. Could say I had escaped, did not know where I had been imprisoned, and could say I have not seen a face."

"That might do, but that would balk our plans of forcing the judge to help us to get Madoc out of the jug."

"I know that, but it cannot be helped. We must try some other means. A pardon is impossible."

"So I have thought all along, but you insisted upon this plan."

"I see my mistake now. What do you say?"

"To tell the truth, I am not in favor of your giving up so easily," put in Ethan Maybrooke, the judge's secretary.

"Well, suggest something, then," required the woman.

"Can't we take up that offer of a hundred thousand?"

"That's so," cried Hepper. "That is a big item. With that bundle we might buy Gowley out of the crib."

But they talked on and on, at great length, until Deadwood Dick and his two witnesses were conversant with the whole vile plot.

Finally the time was ripe for Dick to take action, as young Maybrooke was about going away.

Kodak Kate and McKays went around to the other door, to stand ready to enter there, and Dick stepped boldly into the room from the folding-doors, weapons in hand and ready for business.

"Good-evening," he saluted. "Sorry to spoil your little schemes, but you are my prisoners."

All had sprung to their feet, in greatest surprise and alarm.

They were too amazed to speak or act, at first. Kodak Kate and McKays entered.

But in a moment the reaction came, and with an oath Hepper made as if to get at a weapon.

"Hold!" warned Dick. "Try that and you die."

The fellow did hold, with a bitter oath. He saw it was of no use.

"Who are you?" he cried.

"Deadwood Dick, at your service," was the answer.

And that answer seemed to be enough. The man did not ask for anything more.

But it was not so with the woman. She began to wring her hands and force a cry, imploring to be spared the exposure.

"It is what you deserve," declared Dick, grimly. "You are as false and treacherous as a snake, and a shame to your sex. You shall have your just deserts, both of you. You are as bad a pair as I ever had to arrest."

"But what can you prove against us?" demanded Hepper—still to use that name for him. "Our word will outweigh yours with the judge."

"Will it?" questioned Dick. "We'll see about that. You shall have the opportunity to test it. We have your talk of the last hour all down in short-hand, to say nothing of photographs of you."

At that moment came a ring at the bell.

"Handcuff them, quick," Dick directed McKays.

It was speedily done, and they were disarmed as well.

Another impatient ring at the bell, as though it would be pulled out "by the roots."

"Answer the door, Kate," Dick then requested. "Let them in, and we may make a still larger scoop of this."

Kodak Kate sprung to obey.

She flung a handy shawl over her head, and opened the door immediately.

Into the hall rushed Barnaby the Ferret and the others of Dick's prisoners who had escaped.

The Ferret glanced at Kodak Kate, but took her to be the woman who was then a prisoner in the room along with the others.

"Beg pardon," he exclaimed, "but where's Hepper? The dickens is to pay now, for sure."

"He is in the room there," Kate answered.

"Go right in, all of you. He has been waiting to hear from you."

Deadwood Dick was amazed at the manner in which his ally imitated the voice of the woman prisoner. It was almost perfection itself.

Without a grain of suspicion the Ferret and the others rushed into the room, and all were in before any realized the situation. And when it was realized it was too late.

Deadwood Dick was a surprised man, to see these fellows there, but his weapons took them under cover readily, while Kodak Kate backed him up with hers, in the doorway. There was no chance for the fellows at all.

"Up with your hands!" Dick cried, "or you'll taste of death, and that in the shortest kind of order. I don't know how you have escaped, but it don't matter. It is surrender or die, and no quarters otherwise. Which will you take?"

The cowards that they were put up their hands.

They were too surprised and frightened to do anything else.

And as they did so Kodak Kate bagged a picture of the tableau, with Deadwood Dick at his best.

No sooner were their hands up than McKays proceeded to disarm them, and in a minute or less they were utterly helpless in Dick's hands.

"I guess we will settle your hash this time," Dick observed. "It seems to me we must have the whole band this haul. Now, McKays, you go for police help, and our work will soon be done. This will be about the quickest job I ever did."

It had indeed been a remarkably quick piece of work, and there had been none of chance in it.

Everything had been brought about by Deadwood Dick's keen ability and peculiar knack in his chosen avocation, backed up by his coolness and bravery.

McKays went for policemen, and when he had set out from the house Dick asked Kodak Kate to go for Judge Wynthorpe and bring him back with her without fail, together with witnesses.

In a short time policemen were on hand, and the prisoners were doubly secured against escape, and a little time later Kodak Kate returned with the judge and several others.

Then followed the *expose*, which Deadwood Dick made with telling effect. It was backed up, too, with proof that could not be questioned.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GRAND EXPOSE.

JUDGE WYNTHORPE was dumfounded.

It was a revelation he had never dreamed of. To set it forth in Dick's own words were to excel the limit of our space.

The judge's matrimonial ventures had been exceedingly unfortunate in their results to his happiness.

In truth, domestic happiness was something of which he had dreamed, but of which it had never been his lot to experience the reality.

His first marriage had been bad enough, but the second now turned out even worse. The first wife had come from an evil stock, had been a very termagant, and had finally ended her career with strong drink.

The issue of this union was the son Alban. He inherited all the evil there was in his mother's blood, but none of the judge's virtues to counterbalance it. He was wild, had always been so, but it had never entered the judge's head that he was the rascal he really was.

The second wife was a young woman whom the judge had seen, loved and married, and that was the whole story. He had questioned little or nothing about her connections and past life. She was pretty, to his eye; he coveted her, and he won her. It has been said that the wisest man is a fool sometimes. It was so with the judge in this instance.

Now the simple truth was that this woman, who had given her name as Maybrooke when the judge made her acquaintance, was really a daughter of the notorious burglar, Madoc Gowfrey. And the judge's secretary, who passed for her cousin, was in truth her brother. The judge had made even a worse venture in the second instance than he had in the first. But the secret had been well kept, and no knowing what might have been the ending had it not been for Deadwood Dick.

The judge's son was away at the time of the judge's marriage. When he came home he soon made friends with his youthful step-mother, and was her almost constant companion. They came to love each other, if it be permissible so to employ the word, and to Alban the woman revealed the truth concerning her parentage. In this manner the judge's son became associated with the great burglar more or less, and soon became a big gun in the rascally band of which he was the head. And this was the state of affairs at the time when the police made a capture of Madoc Gowfrey.

It fell to Judge Wynthorpe to sentence the man to prison. Little did he imagine the man was his wife's father. The judge's son and wife, and the wife's brother immediately began to plan a way to get Gowfrey pardoned. Their schemes have been set forth fully enough, perhaps. On the night of the wife's disappearance, she was not carried off by force, as supposed, but left the house of her own will, and alone, leaving the damp handkerchief and empty bottle on the floor for effect. The letters sent to one Martin Garble were written by the secretary. Afterward he redirected them to Madam Gounot, at a different street and number, and they were received by the judge's wife, as has been shown.

Many smaller points, now readily understood, need not be explained further. It had been planned to try to rob the mint, and it was urgent that the notorious burglar should be at liberty. Such a scheme was next to useless, of course, but it was on foot nevertheless, and would have been attempted had everything worked as the rascals desired. But Deadwood Dick had nipped the whole thing in the bud, so far as that was concerned. It was through Barnaby the Ferret that Detective McKays was trapped, and a good deal of fine playing had been managed by the Ferret. But his career of evil usefulness was at an end now. Every point was brought out by Dick in his *expose*, and it seemed marvelous how he could have learned so much in so short a time; but there was no room for doubt for the work of Kodak Kate was too perfect to admit of a doubt, and McKays was a witness to all.

With bitter curses against his son and wife, the judge left the house, with a caution to the detectives not to allow the prisoners to escape.

It was not likely that such a thing would happen, at this late stage of the game.

All were late in hand by the police, and duly charged and imprisoned.

That business done, Dick went to the house where he had left the Ferret and the others prisoners some time before.

Kodak Kate, meanwhile, with the aid of McKays, took charge of the big colored woman who had been left bound and gagged in the kitchen. She was to be held as a witness.

When Dick reached the house it did not take him a great while to find the detective, and he was speedily liberated.

The poor fellow was humiliated enough, and felt his disgrace keenly.

He brightened up, however, when Dick told him of the recapture.

Every other detail of the case was attended to with care.

And so ended one of the greatest cases of the day.

It was set down as a masterpiece of detective skill, and Kodak Kate came in for a share of the honor.

The prisoners had an early hearing, and were sent to jail to await trial.

Judge Wynthorpe immediately applied for a divorce, which will unquestionably be granted.

And it is certain, too, that the rascally band will get their just reward at their final trial, which will be imprisonment for no easy terms.

The robbery of the mint will not be attempted, Madoc Gowfrey will not be pardoned, nor will any of the rascals give further trouble for some time to come. There were charges enough against them all to seal their doom.

Dick wrote a full report of the matter to Governor Woodlow, the same night of the arrest, telling him everything, and that letter confirmed the governor's already high estimation of Dick's detective ability. It was a great surprise to him, too, that Dick had been able to terminate so soon a case that had so long baffled the police.

Deadwood Dick was the lion of the hour in detective circles.

McKays could not do him honor enough.

And Kodak Kate, she came in for a full share of the glory that was being given around.

Deadwood Dick expected to leave San Francisco on a certain day a short time later, and called to bid farewell to his brave little ally.

Kodak Kate was at home, having had notice of his intention, and was ready to greet him. She was prettily attired, and looked anything but a fearless detective and expert reporter.

Deadwood Dick was charmed at this new revelation of her true self. He was loth to take leave of the city as he had arranged. (And indeed, later on, when he was on the point of leaving his hotel to take the train, he was glad to receive a detaining message.)

Kate greeted him heartily, and Deadwood Dick was more at home than ever in that neat little parlor on this his third visit.

"I am about going away, Miss Burton," he said, "and have called to bid you good-by, and to thank you once again for the great help you rendered me in this case of deepest rascality."

"And I must tell you again that you were welcome to the little help I was able to render," the lady responded. "If I can ever be of further service to you here in San Francisco, do not hesitate to call on me."

"I shall do so, assuredly," Dick declared.

"And before you go I have a present for you," the lady apprised.

"A present for me?" questioned Dick, wonderingly.

"Yes; and here it is."

She handed him a photograph as she spoke.

Dick took it, and a smile lighted up his face as he looked at it.

The reader can guess what the picture was. It was the snap shot Kate had taken at the moment when Dick made his great arrest.

"See what a grand subject it was," the lady urged.

"It is hard to believe it is a picture of myself, this hard-faced fellow," Dick remarked.

"But it is, sir. You see yourself now as you appear when in grim earnest. Your face itself is enough to take the nerve out of rascals, when you take on that stern expression."

"Well, I accept the picture as a souvenir of our brief association, and shall ever keep it to remind me of the best and bravest little ally I ever had. I am only sorry your own face is not in it; but perhaps you will make up the loss by giving me a photograph of yourself."

"Would you really care to have one?" she playfully asked.

"Nothing would please me more," Dick assured.

When he took his leave, half an hour later, he carried the desired photograph with him.

And in return for it Dick left a very substantial reward for Kate, for her help in the case, in a place where she found it soon after he had gone.

An hour later, when Dick was on the point of leaving his hotel, a message was handed to him. It was one that changed his plans immediately. It was a detaining message, as said in a previous paragraph, and an important one. A great crime had just come to light, and Dick was called upon to take the case in hand.

THE END.

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